



The Story
of
ZOYA and SHURA

by
L. Kosmodemyanskaya



Kamgar Prakashan

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FOREWORD

April 1949. The huge hall of the Pleyel in Paris. The Congress of the Defenders of Peace. The tribune is decked with the flags of all nations, and behind every flag there are peoples and countries, human hopes and human destinies.

The crimson flag of our land, the land marching towards communism. It bears the hammer and sickle, the symbol of peaceful labour and of the indissoluble unity between those who work, build and create. How many eyes, how many hearts are turned trustingly towards the Soviet Union—the hope and support of the working world!

We, members of the Soviet delegation, constantly feel the burning love of the other members of the Congress. They meet us so warmly, they welcome us so gladly! And every glance, every handshake seems to say: "We believe in you. We are relying on you. We will never forget what you have done."

How vast the world is! With overwhelming force you feel that here, in this immense lofty hall, when you look at the white, yellow, and dark-olive faces, faces of every shade and colour—from milk-white to deep black. Two thousand men and women from every corner of the earth have gathered here to speak in defence of peace, in defence of democracy and happiness.

I look about the hall. There are many women. Their faces are alive with passionate attention. And no wonder, for the call for peace comes indeed from every corner of the earth, and in it lies the hope of every wife and every mother.

How many stories have I heard here of people who sacrificed their lives in order to defeat fascism, in order that the late war should end in the victory of light over darkness, of that which is noble over that which is base, of the human over the inhuman!

Surely the blood of our children cannot have been shed in vain. Surely the peace which has been won at the cost of our children's lives and of our tears—the tears of mothers, widows and orphans—will not be destroyed again by the loathsome forces of evil.

Our delegate, Hero of the Soviet Union Alexei Maresyev, steps onto the tribune. He is greeted with a storm of applause. For all present Alexei Maresyev is the living embodiment of the Russian people, their courage and determination, their selfless bravery and endurance. And all feel that his heroic feat has been an expression of the noble qualities of the Soviet people, the people who saved the world and civilization from fascist barbarism.

"Everyone of us must ask himself, 'What am I doing today in defence of peace?' " Alexei Maresyev's words ring out across the hall. "Today there is no task more honourable, more noble or great than the fight for peace. It is the duty of all."

I listen to him and ask myself: What can I do today for the cause of peace? And I answer myself: Yes, I, too, can do my part. I will tell the story of my children. Yes, my children who were born to happiness, joy and peaceful labour, and who fell in the fight against fascism, in the defence of their people's freedom, independence and happiness. Yes, I will tell about them.....

The Story of ZOYA and SHURA

ASPEN WOODS

In the north of Tambov Region there is a village called Osinoviye Gai, which means Aspen Woods. Old folks used to say that long, long ago dense forests grew here. But when I was a child there was not a sign of forest for miles and miles around. Instead, as far as the eye could see, there stretched fields of rye, oats and millet. The land close to the village itself was rutted with gullies. Every year the gullies increased in width and number, and it seemed that the cottages on the edge of the village would soon slide down to the foot of their steep uneven slopes. In winter hungry wolves of the steppe lurked in the gullies. I was afraid to leave the house on winter evenings: everything cold and still, and snow, snow all round, and the distant howl of wolves, either real or imaginary.....

But how wondrously the country changed in spring! The flowering meadows, wrapped in a tender, almost luminous green, and everywhere the gleaming sparks of field flowers, scarlet, blue and gold. You could bring home whole armfuls of daisies cornflowers and bluebells!

Our village was a big one, with about five thousand inhabitants. A scrap of earth could not feed a poor peasant family, and from nearly every cottage somebody went away to earn a living in Tambov, Penza or even in Moscow.

I grew up in a large and loving family. My father, Timofei Semyonovich Churikov, was a rural clerk, a man with no formal education to speak of, but he could write and was quite well

read. He loved books, and would always quote what he had read in an argument.

"And yet," he would observe, "a book I read dealt with the heavenly bodies in quite a different way....."

For three years I went to the local school, and in the autumn of 1910 Father took me to the girls' high school in the small town of Kirsanov. Nearly forty years have passed since then, but I remember everything down to the last detail, as if it all happened yesterday.

I marvelled at the two-storied building of the school—there was nothing to stand up to it back home in Aspen Woods. Holding tightly onto Father's hand I walked into the entrance hall and stopped in confusion. Everything was so unexpected and strange: the wide entrance, the stone floor, the broad staircase with its iron banisters. There were many girls who had come with their parents. It was they who confused me most of all, more even than the surroundings which seemed so luxurious to me. Kirsanov was a provincial merchant town, and there were hardly any peasant children among the girls, who had come, as I had, to take the examinations. I remember one girl, who looked a real merchant's daughter, plump, rosy, with bright-blue ribbons in her long pigtails. She looked me over scornfully, pursed her lips and turned away. I pressed close to Father, and he stroked my head, as much as to say, "Don't be shy, dear, everything will be all right."

Then we went up the staircase, and they began to call us into a big room, where there were three examiners sitting behind a table. I remember that I answered all the questions, and then, forgetting my fears, I recited some lines from Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman*.

Father was waiting for me downstairs. I ran out to him, wild with joy. As he sprang up to meet me, his face shone with happiness.

And so began my days in high school. I look back on them now with a feeling of heartfelt gratitude.

Mathematics we learnt from Arkadi Anisimovich Belousov, who made his subject vivid and interesting. His wife, Elizaveta Afanasyevna, taught Russian Language and Literature.

She always came into the classroom smiling, and there was no resisting that smile—it was so alive and young and attractive. Elizaveta Afanasyevna would sit down at her table, cast a thoughtful glance at us, and begin without any introduction:

The forest sheds its purple garment...

We could have listened to her forever. She had a way of telling stories, losing herself and delighting in the beauty of her words. She knew how to reveal to us the stirring power of Russian literature, its profound human-heartedness and the thoughts and feelings which inspire it.

As I listened to Elizaveta Afanasyevna I realized that the work of a teacher is a great art. To become a really good teacher one must have a warm heart, a clear mind, and, of course, love children. Elizaveta Afanasyevna loved us dearly. She never said so, but we knew it without her saying—we felt it in the way she looked at us, in the fond restraint with which she would sometimes put her hand on a pupil's shoulder, in the way she sorrowed whenever any one of us met with failure. And we liked everything about her: her youth, her beautiful, pensive face, her kind, straightforward character and her love for her work. Long afterwards, when I was bringing up my own children, I would often recall my favourite teacher and try to guess what she would have said to me, how she would have advised me in a difficult moment.

I remember Kirsanov high school for yet another reason. The art teacher discovered that I could draw. I loved drawing very much but was afraid to admit even to myself that I should like to become an artist. Sergei Semyonovich Pomazov once said to me:

"You must study... you absolutely must study... you have considerable ability."

Like Elizaveta Afanasyevna, he was very fond of his subject, and at his lessons we learnt not only about colours, lines and proportions, but about what makes the soul of art: about how one must love life, how one must learn to see it everywhere, in all its manifestations. Sergei Semyonovich was first to acquaint us with the works of the wonderful realist artists Repin, Surikov, Levitan. He had a big album with lovely reproductions in it. It was then that another ambition was born in my heart: to travel to Moscow and visit the Tretyakov Picture Gallery.

But although I longed to go on studying after high school, I realized that it could not be. The family could hardly make ends meet. I had to help my parents. And so, after graduating from high school, I returned to Aspen Woods.

A NEW LIFE

The news of the October Revolution reached me when I was still in Kirsanov. I must confess that at the time I had no clear understanding of what had happened. I remember only a general feeling of joy: a big holiday had come for the people. The town was in a joyous uproar, red flags streamed in the wind. Simple folk, soldiers and workers, spoke at the meetings; new words full of faith and determination rang out: "the Bolshevik Party," "the Soviets," "Communism,"

When I returned to my native village, my elder brother Sergei, my childhood friend and comrade, said to me, "A new life is beginning, Lyuba! A brand-new life! I am volunteering for the Red Army. I can't remain idle at a time like this."

Sergei was no more than two years my senior, but I was a mere child beside him. He knew more and had a better understanding of what was going on. And I could see that his decision was a firm one.

"But what shall I do, Sergei?" I asked.

"Go as a teacher, of course," answered my brother, without a moment's hesitation. "Schools will be springing up like mushrooms now. You don't think that now there'll be only two schools in Aspen Woods for five thousand inhabitants? Everyone will want to study! The people won't live without learning any more."

Two days after my arrival he went off to join the Red Army, and I lost no time in going to the People's Education Department, where I at once received an appointment to the village of Solovyanka as an elementary-school teacher.

Solovyanka is about three versts from Aspen Woods. It was an unsightly, squalid settlement composed of miserable straw-thatched huts.

I was somewhat comforted by the school building itself. What had once been the manor house stood deep among the trees on the edge of the village. The leaves were already tinted yellow, but from a distance the branches of an ashberry right in front of the school windows glowed so merrily and welcomingly that I could not help cheering up. The house turned out to be quite roomy and in good condition. A kitchen, entrance hall and two rooms; the smaller one, with iron shutters, was to be mine. On its table I laid out the notebooks, ABC books and exercise books, pencils, penholders and nibs I had brought with me, set down the bottle of ink; and then took a walk through the village to write down the names of all the boys and girls of school age.

I called at all the cottages, one after another. The people were quite friendly when they learned the purpose of my coming.

"So you're a teacher? Well, go ahead and teach!" said a tall, gaunt old woman with thick eyebrows, which seemed knitted angrily. "But it's a waste of time writing the girls down. No use

teaching them. Weave and spin and then marry—what do they need learning for?”

But I stood my ground firmly.

“These are not the old days. Now there is a completely new life beginning,” I said, using the words of my brother Sergei. “Everybody needs to study.”

The next day the classroom was crammed full. All the thirty children whom I had written down the day before had come.

In the end row by the windows sat the little ones, the beginners; in the middle row—pupils of the second grade; on the other side by the wall were the eldest, the fourteen-year-olds; of these there were only four. On the bench in front of me sat two little girls, both with fair hair, blue eyes and freckles, both wearing frocks of the same colour. They were the youngest of the lot and they were called Lida and Marusya Glebova. The four boys by the wall stood up to greet me; the others followed suit.

“Good morning, Lyubov Timofeyevna!” they all cried in a discordant chorus. “Welcome to Solovyanka!”

“Good morning. Thank you!” I answered.

That was how my first lesson began. Then day after day went by. It was very difficult for me to manage three grades at the same time. While the beginners were diligently writing strokes and the seniors working out sums, I would tell the middle row why day changes to night. Then I would check the big ones’ sums, while the second group was busy with a grammar exercise. Meanwhile, as the beginners would grow tired of tracing out strokes, I would return to them, and they would begin to read, shouting out the syllables at the top of their voices.

I lost myself completely in my work. I felt happy and contented with my children. The days flew past unnoticed. A teacher from a neighbouring village paid me a few visits

According to my ideas at that time, he had enormous experience, with three whole years of teaching school! He sat through our lessons, and then gave advice, and on leaving always said that my work was going well.

“The kids love you,” he would explain, “and that’s the main thing.”

HOME AGAIN

I taught at Solovyanka for one term. For the new school year I was transferred to Aspen Woods. I was sorry to leave the children of Solovyanka, we had had time to become fast friends, but I was glad of the transfer; it was good to be home again, back among my own people!

When I returned to Aspen Woods I met a childhood comrade, Tolya Kosmodemyansky. The same age as myself, he seemed much more grown-up. I had far less seriousness and worldly wisdom. Anatoly Petrovich had served in the Red Army for about a year and was now in charge of the Aspen Woods library and reading room.

It was in the cottage which housed the library that the dramatic circle gathered for its rehearsals. Young people of Aspen Woods and the surrounding villages, pupils and teachers were working on A. Ostrovsky’s play *Poverty Is No Sin*. I played Lyubov Gordeyevna, Anatoly Petrovich was Lyubim Tortsov. He was our leader and producer. He used to explain things cheerfully and interestingly. If someone mixed or garbled his words, or suddenly began shouting his head off, rolling his eyes and waving his arms about, Anatoly petrovich would mimic him so wittily, though without malice, that the unfortunate amateur would forever be cured of the desire to walk on stilts on the stage. His laughter was loud, merry and irrepressible—I have never met anyone with such a sincere and joyful laugh.

Soon Anatoly petrovich and I were married, and I was taken

into the Kosmodemyansky household. Anatoly Petrovich lived with his mother, Lydia Fyodorovna, and with his younger brother Fedya. His other brother, Alexei, served in the Red Army.

Anatoly Petrovich and I lived happily together. He was a quiet man, not lavish with tender words, but in his every glance and every action I felt his constant concern for me, and we understood each other at a word. We were overjoyed when we learnt that we were to have a child. "It will most certainly be a boy!" we decided and began considering a name for the lad and guessing about his future.

"You just think, though," Anatoly Petrovich would dream aloud, "how interesting it is to show a child fire for the first time, a star, a bird, to take him to the woods, to the river, and then to the sea, into the mountains..... Just think, for the first time!"

And then he was born, our baby.

"Congratulations on a daughter, Lyubov Timofeyevna," said the old woman who was caring for me. "Here she is announcing herself."

The sound of crying rang clearly through the room. I stretched out my hands, and they showed me a tiny girl, with a small white face, dark hair and blue eyes. At that moment I forgot that I had ever dreamed of a son and was sure that I had always wanted and expected a girl, this very girl.

"Let's call her Zoya," said Anatoly Petrovich.

And I agreed.

It was September 13, 1923.

MY DAUGHTER

Perhaps to people who have never had children it seems that all babies are exactly alike: they understand nothing, and all they do know is how to cry, shout and get in the way of their

elders. That, of course, is not true, I am sure that I could have recognized my daughter among a thousand other newly-born babies, that her face had its own special expression, that there was something very special about her eyes, that her voice was quite different from any other. I could have watched for hours, if there had only been time, how she slept, how in her sleep she would pull her little hand out of the blanket in which I had wrapped her up tightly, how she would open her eyes and look straight before her, from under those long, thick eyelashes.

And then—it was wonderful!—each day began to bring something new, and it dawned on me that the child was really growing and changing and "not from day to day, but from hour to hour." Now the little girl even in the midst of the very loudest crying would stop when she heard someone's voice. Now she would begin to catch even the softest of sounds and turn her head towards the ticking of the clock. Now she would begin to transfer her glance from her father to me, to Grandma, and to Uncle Fedya (that was how after Zoya's birth we jokingly called Anatoly Petrovich's twelve-year-old brother). The day came when my little girlie began to recognize me—that was a good and happy day and one I shall always remember. I bent over the cradle. Zoya looked at me attentively, thought a little and suddenly smiled. Everybody assured me that this smile had no real meaning to it, that children of that age will smile at one and all, but I knew it was not so!

Zoya was a tiny thing. I bathed her often. In the village they said bathing would make a child grow more quickly. She was out in the open a lot, and although the winter was coming on she slept outdoors with her face uncovered. Careful not to spoil the child we would never pick her up without a reason—that was the counsel of my mother and my mother-in-law, Lydia Fyodorovna. I obediently followed their advice; and it was perhaps because of this that Zoya slept soundly through the nights, without demanding to be rocked or nursed. She grew up very calm and quiet. Sometimes Uncle Fedya would come

up to her and, standing over the cradle, would plead: "Zoya, say: Un-ky! Go on! Say: Ma-ma, and Pa-pa!"

His pupil would smile broadly and burble something quite unintelligible. But after a time she actually did begin to repeat, at first uncertainly and then more and more firmly, "Papa," "Mama."... I remember her next word after "Mama" and "Papa" was the strange word "Ap." She was standing on the floor, a wee little thing, then suddenly stood up on her toes and said, "Ap!" As we guessed later, this was her way of saying: "Take me up!"

THE BITTER YEAR

Even old folks could not remember such a severe winter. That January remains in my memory icy-cold and dark, so changed and gloomy did everything around become when we learned of the death of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. For us he was not only a leader, a great and extraordinary man. He was a dear friend and advisor to each one of us. Everything that took place in our village or in our homes was linked with him. If anything good happened to us, Lenin was behind it. That was how we all felt.

Before, we had only two schools, now, there were more than ten. Lenin had done that. Before, the people used to live poor and hungry, now, they had become strong and had begun to live quite a new life. Whom else but Lenin had we to thank for that? We were shown films; teachers, doctors and agronomists were busy educating the peasants; the reading room and the People's House were full. The village was quickly expanding. Life had become brighter and more joyful. Those who did not know their letters learnt them, those who had mastered grammar were thinking of further studies. Where had all this come from, who had brought us this new life? To that question everyone had the same answer, one dear and glorious name: Lenin.

And suddenly—he was no more. The mind refused to believe it.

Every evening peasants would call in on Anatoly Petrovich to share the bitter sorrow which they all felt so deeply.

"To think of such a man dying....! I wish Ilyich had lived to be a hundred, but he's dead...." said old Stepan Korets.

And in February 1924 a copy of *Prauda* arrived in Aspen Woods with Comrade Stalin's speech at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets. Anatoly Petrovich read the paper out loud in the village reading room. It was packed with people, and every word of Stalin's speech found a deep response in their hearts.

When Anatoly Petrovich had finished, the paper was passed round: everyone wanted to see it with his own eyes, touch the paper on which the straight, courageous words of Stalin's vow to fulfil Lenin's behests were printed.

Some days later a worker, Stepan Zababurin, who had once been the village shepherd, arrived in Aspen Woods. He related how people from all over the country had come to bid Lenin the last farewell.

"The frost was freezing your breath," he said, "it was already night outside, but people kept on coming. There was no end to them. And they brought their children with them too, to see him for the last time."

"But we shan't see him, and Zoya won't see him," said Anatoly Petrovich sadly.

We did not know then that a mausoleum would be built beside the eternal Kremlin Wall, where people could come and see Ilyich.

I kept the paper with Stalin's vow. "When our girl grows up, she will read it," I thought.

MY SON

Anatoly Petrovich loved to sit at the table with Zoya on his knee. He usually read at dinner, and his daughter would sit there very quietly, with her head on his shoulder, and never bother him.

She was still small and frail. She began to walk at eleven months. People loved her because she was very amiable and trusting. When she went outside the gate she would smile at the passers-by, and if someone said jokingly, "Come and pay me a visit," she would gladly put out her hand and follow her new friend.

By the time she was two Zoya could already speak well, and simply loved to talk about the things she had seen when she came back from her visits.

"I have just been at Petrovna's. Do you know Petrovna? There's Galya, Ksanya, Misha, Sanya and old grandad. And a cow. And there are some lambs too. Do they jump!"

Zoya was not yet two years old when her brother Shura was born. Our boy came into the world shouting at the top of his lungs. He shouted in a deep bass voice, very sure and insistent. He was bigger and more robust than Zoya, but had the same bright eyes and dark hair.

After Shura was born we often used to say to Zoya, "You are older. You are a big girl!" She would sit at the table together with the grownups, but on a high chair. She used to treat Shura patronizingly: she would give him his dummy if he dropped it, rock his cradle if he woke up and there was no one in the room. And now I would quite often ask her to do things for me.

"Zoya, bring me a napkin," I would say. "Give me a cup, please."

Or, "Well, Zoya, help me to clear up: put the book away, put the chair in place."

She would do everything very willingly and then ask, "Is there anything else I could do?"

Once, when she was three and Shura was entering his second year, she took him by the hand and picking up a bottle went off to Grandma's for the milk.

I remember I was milking a cow once. Shura was crawling nearby; Zoya, cup in hand, stood waiting for fresh milk. Suddenly the fly-pestered cow waved its tail, hitting me smartly. Zoya put the cup down quickly, grasped the cow by the tail with one hand, and taking a twig in the other started to drive the flies away, saying, "Why did you hit Mummy? Don't you dare hit Mummy!" Then she looked at me, adding, "I'm helping you!"

The two were a funny combination—Zoya so frail and slight, and Shura, chubby and clumsy.

In the village they used to say about Shura: "Our teacher's got a boy as broad as he's tall, he's the same height lying down as he is standing up."

And indeed, Shura was a thick set lad, surpassing Zoya in strength when he was only eighteen months old. But that did not prevent Zoya from caring for him just as if he were the weaker one, nor from shouting at him sometimes in a strict voice.

Zoya began to talk clearly from the very outset. But Shura could never say "r" till he was three. This pained Zoya very much

"Now, Shura, say: rain."

"Lain," repeated Shura.

"No, not like that! Say: ray."

"Lay "

"Not 'lay' but 'ray' What a silly boy you are! Try again: run."

"Lun "

"Porridge."

"Pollidge."

Once, losing her patience, Zoya slapped her brother on the forehead. But the two-year-old pupil was a lot stronger than his four-year-old teacher: he shook his head indignantly and pushed Zoya away.

"Keep off!" he shouted angrily. "Stop fighting!"

Zoya looked at him in surprise, swallowing her tears. And a little later I again heard, "Now say: sparrow."

And Shura's voice repeated obediently, "Spallow."

I do not know whether Shura realized that he was our youngest, but from the very first he managed to make full use of this. "I'm little," he would say in self-defence. "I'm little!" he would insist if he were not given something he had set his heart on. "I'm little!" he would announce proudly, sometimes for no reason at all, but fully aware of his privileges and the justice of his cause. He knew that we loved him and he wanted to submit everyone, Zoya and me and Father and Grandma, to his will.

He had only to start crying for Grandma to say, "And who has been hurting my little Shura? Come to me quick, my darling! See what I've got here for my little one!"

And with a happy, mischievous smile on his face Shura would clamber onto Grandma's knee.

If he was refused something he would lie on the floor and begin to howl deafeningly, stamp his feet or moan plaintively, his whole appearance saying clearly, "Here I am, poor little Shura, and no one pets me, no one feels sorry for me!"

Once when Shura began to shout and cry, demanding to be given jelly before dinner, Anatoly Petrovich and I left the room. Shura was left alone. At first, he went on crying loudly and exclaiming from time to time, "Give me jelly! I want jelly!" Then, apparently, he decided not to waste so many words and

shouted simply: "Give! Want!" While he was crying he had not noticed that we had gone out, but sensing the silence he raised his head, looked round and stopped shouting: what was the use if no one listened! He thought for a moment and began to build something out of twigs.

Then we came back. As soon as he saw us he began shouting again, but Anatoly Petrovich said, "If you go on crying, we shall leave you alone, and we won't live with you. Understand?"

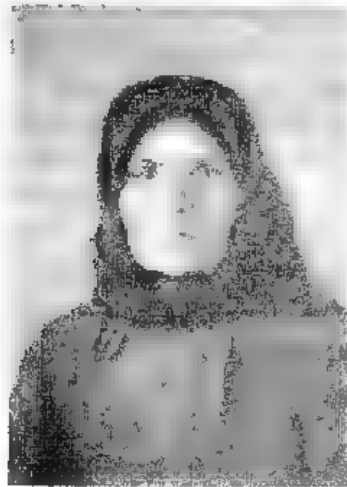
And Shura was silent

On another occasion he began crying and peeped out through outspread fingers to see if we had any sympathy for his tears. But we paid no attention to him: Anatoly Petrovich went on reading his book, and I marked the notebooks. Then Shura clambered quietly onto my knee as if nothing had happened. I ruffled his hair and, putting him down, went on with my work. And Shura did not bother me any more. These two occasions cured him: the naughtiness and shouting ceased as soon as we stopped our indulgence

Zoya was very fond of Shura. She would often repeat very seriously what she had heard the grownups say: "No use spoiling the child, let him cry, no great harm will come of it." It sounded very funny, coming from her. But when she was left alone with her brother she was unfailingly kind to him. If he fell over and burst into tears, she would run over to him, take him by the hand and try to lift our little fatty up. She would wipe away his tears with the hem of her dress, saying:

"Don't cry, there's a good boy, that's a fine chap! Here, take your bricks. Let's build a railway. And here's a magazine! Would you like me to show you the pictures? Here, look"

If was a curious thing—if there was something Zoya did not know, she would at once admit it. But Shura was Uncommonly vain, and his tongue simply would not pronounce the words "I don't know." To avoid admitting that he did not know



Meyra Mikhailovna, Zoya and Shura's Grandma

something he was ready to resort to any tricks. I remember Anatoly Petrovich bought a big children's book with lovely pictures of all kinds of animals, objects and people. The children and I loved to look through this book, and I used to point to a picture and ask Shura: "What's that?" He named the things he knew at once, gladly and with pride, but what did he not invent to avoid giving an answer he did not know!

"What's that?" I ask, pointing at a locomotive.

Shura sighs, looks worried, and suddenly says with a cunning little smile, "You tell me yourself!"

"And what's that?"

"Chicken," he answers quickly.

"That's right. And this?"

It is a picture of a strange, mysterious animal—a camel.

"Mummy," begs Shura, "you turn over the page and show me something else!"

I am waiting to see what other excuses he will find.

"And what is that?" I say slyly, pointing a hippopotamus.

"Let me eat first and I'll tell you," answers Shura and chews so long that it looks as if he will never finish.

Then I show him a picture of a smiling girl in a blue dress and white apron, and ask, "What's the name of this little girl, Shura?"

And with a crafty smile Shura answers, "You ask her yourself!"

GRANDMOTHER

The children loved to go and see Grandma Mavra Mikhailovna. She would give them a cheery welcome, and treat them to pancakes and milk. And afterwards she would find a free minute to play with them their favourite game of "turnip."

"Granny planted a turnip," Grandma would begin thoughtfully, "and she said, 'Grow, turnip, sweet, strong and very big.' The turnip grew big and sweet and strong and round and yellow. Granny went to pull up the turnip: she pulls and pulls but cannot pull it up.... (Here Grandma would show how she tugged at the obstinate vegetable.) Granny called her granddaughter Zoya (whereupon Zoya would clutch at Grandma's skirt). Zoya pulls Granny and Granny pulls the turnip. They pull and pull but cannot pull it up. Zoya called Shura (Shura promptly grabs Zoya). Shura pulls Zoya, Zoya pulls Granny and Granny pulls the turnip—they pull and pull (the children's eyes are agog with expectation)..... and pull up the turnip!"

And then, as if from nowhere, Grandma would produce an apple, or a pie, or even a real turnip. The children would hang onto Mavra Mikhailovna screaming and laughing, and she would present them with the gift

"Granny, let's pull up the turnip!" Shura would ask almost before he was inside the house.

About two years later, when somebody tried to tell the children the story of the turnip and began with the usual words, "Grandpa planted a turnip. . ." they both started to protest, "Grandma planted it! Not Grandpa but Grandma!"

My mother had worked from dawn to dusk all her life. She had the entire household on her hands—a house, a field and six children who all had to be dressed, washed, fed and have their sewing done; and mother bent her back without sparing herself. With us children and later with her grandchildren she was

unfailingly tender and tolerant. She did not just say, "Respect your elders," she always tried to make her ideas clear to the children, to make them reach their minds and their hearts. "Take this house we are living in," she would say to Zoya and Shura. "The old folks built it. Here is the stove which Petrovich built for us, what a fine one it is! Petrovich is old and wise, he's got hands of gold. You can't help respecting the old folks, can you?" Mother was very kindhearted. I remember, as a girl, if ever she saw a tramp in those days many homeless wanderers were about—she would always call him in, give him something to eat and drink, and some old clothes.

One day my father opened the trunk, rummaged for a long time there, and then asked, "Mother, where is my blue shirt?"

"Don't be angry, Father," replied my mother awkwardly, "I gave it to Stepanych." Stepanych was an old peasant, who lived by himself, uncared for and ailing. Mother used to support him and help him as best she could.

Father said nothing at all.

Now, after so many long years, I often remember what a hardy, enduring, patient, goodhearted woman my mother was.

I remember the time our cow was stolen from us. Everyone knows what a misfortune that was for a peasant family. But Mother did not utter a word of complaint, did not shed a tear. Another year, I remember, there was a fire, and our whole place was burnt down to the ground. That was a great blow to my



Timofei Semyonovich. Zoya and Shura's Grandad

father. He sat on a fallen tree, his hands hanging hopelessly, his eyes fixed in despair on the ground.

"We'll manage, Father, never mind!" said Mother, going up to him. She stood beside him for a minute and added: "Don't worry, we'll return it all!"

Mother was quite illiterate; right up to the time she died she did not know a single letter; but she valued learning and respected it. It was thanks to her care that we children became educated people: she insisted that we should be sent to school, and afterwards to high school.

Our family was quite often in need, and I remember that when things got very bad my father decided to take my brother Sergei away from the fourth grade of high school. My mother would not hear of it. Bent on giving her son an education, she was ready to do anything to go to the school principal, to humiliate herself, to beg him to give her son a schooling at government expense.

"You don't know a single letter, Mother, but you get along all right," Father would say gloomily.

Mother did not argue but stood her ground. "They are right when they say that learning is light and ignorance darkness," she loved to repeat. She knew from her own experience how dark life was for those who had no learning.

"When you go to school, study well," she would instruct Zoya and Shura. "You will grow cleverer, you will get to know a lot—it will be better for you and your folk."

Grandmother was a wonderful storyteller. She knew a great number of tales and could relate them without looking up from her work: she would go on knitting, peeling potatoes or kneading dough and all the time talking calmly, just as if she were thinking aloud.

"A fox runs in the wood and sees a woodcock sitting on a tree, and says:

"Woodcock, woodcock, to town I have been!"

"Chuck-chuck, chuck-chuck, that I have seen."

"Woodcock, woodcock, I've brought you a decree!"

"Chuck-chuck, chuck-chuck, so I see, so I see."

"For you woodcocks not to sit on trees, but hop all day about the leas,.....!"

Zoya and Shura sit side by side on a low bench and do not take their eyes off Grandma. And she finishes the tale and begins another one: about Grey Wolf, about Bear Sweet Tooth, about Cowardly Hare and again about Sly Fox.

BROTHER AND SISTER

Zoya was only allowed to play with Shura near the house, inside the fence, so that he should not get hurt by one of the horses or cows which grazed freely on the meadow nearby. But with the older girls, Manya and Tasya, she would go a long way off, to the fields and the river, a merry little brook, where you could bathe all day long with no fear of drowning.

Zoya used to spend hours chasing butterflies with a net and gathering flowers, then she would go bathing, and—at the age of five!—even wash her own linen in the brook, dry it in the sun and come home in clean clothes!

"Look, Mummy," she would say, gazing up into my eyes, "did I do the washing well? You aren't angry, are you?"

Even now I can see her five-year-old face, ruddy and sunburnt, with clear grey eyes. A brief summer shower has just passed, and the sun is again shining warmly; the wind sweeps the last clouds from the high-ceiled sky into the void beyond the horizon; heavy drops drip off the trees; and Zoya patters up to me across the warm puddles, laughing and showing me how wet her frock is... ..

I can see her riding out to a distant meadow for the hay in a rickety, squeaking cart, pulled at a jolting trot by an ancient

nag. She would come back on top of a high load, and together with the grownups stir and spread out the scented hay to dry behind the barn; and then jump and roll about in its soft waves; and at last, blissfully tired, curl up into a ball there and fall fast asleep.

And what fun it was to climb trees! To scramble up so high that it gave you a fright to look down, and your heart missed a beat when you happened to catch hold of a thin branch. And then to climb down carefully, feeling the branches with your bare toes, and trying not to tear your dress....

And it was even jollier to climb onto the roof of the barn or up to the belfry—the favourite observation point of the village children. You had the whole village before you on the palm of your hand, and over there—fields, fields rolling endlessly and distant villages.... And what was beyond them? Far, far away?

Coming home at last, Zoya would sit down beside me and ask, "Mummy, what is there beyond our Aspen Woods?"

"Just a village called Peaceful Farms."

"And what's beyond the village?"

"Solovyanka."

"And what's beyond Solovyanka?"

"Pavlovka, Alexandrovka, Prudki."

"And beyond that? But what is beyond Kirsanov? And is Moscow beyond Tambov?" And she would say with a sigh, "Wouldn't I just like to go there!"

When Father had nothing to do she would climb onto his knee and ply him with all sorts of questions, some of them entirely unexpected. And she used to listen to what was going on in the world as if she were listening to the most wonderful fairy tale of all: about the high mountains, the blue seas and the dense forests, about the big distant towns and about the people who live there. At much moments Zoya was all ears: her mouth opened a little, her eyes shone, and at times it almost

seemed that she forgot to breathe. In the end, overwhelmed by the novelty of it all, she would fall asleep in her father's lap.

Four-year-old Shura, noisy and carefree, was always up to some kind of prank.

"Shura's pocket is moving!" Zoya exclaimed in surprise once.

And it really was moving!

"What have you got there?"

Quite simple: the pocket is full of cockchafers. They are squirming about and trying to escape, but Shura squeezes his pocket in his fist. Poor beetles!

What do I not find in those pockets of his in the evenings! A slingshot, pieces of tin and glass, hooks, stones, strictly forbidden matches, and a multitude of other things. There was always a bruise on Shura's forehead, and his hands and legs were torn and scratched, his knees cut. To sit still was torture for him, the cruelest punishment. He runs and hops and jumps from early morning until I call in the children to supper and to bed. How often have I seen him running about the yard after the rain, beating the puddles with a stick! Spray flies in sparkling fountains over his head, he is wet through, but he seems not to notice it—he beats even harder with his stick and bursts into a song of his own composing. I cannot understand the words, all that I can hear is a kind of exultant war cry: "Tramba-bam! Baram-bam!" But it is quite understandable: Shura must give vent to his delight at everything which surrounds him, he must express how overjoyed he is by the sun and the trees and the warm deep puddles!

Zoya was Shura's constant playmate, and she used to run about just as noisily, gaily and obliviously happy. But she was also able to sit and listen for a long time, and when she did so, her eyes were attentive and her dark brows slightly drawn together. Sometimes I would come upon her by a fallen birch tree not far from the house, sitting with her chin in her cupped hands, with a faraway look in her eyes.

"What are you doing here?" I would ask.

"I'm thinking," Zoya would answer.

Of those far-off days, which have now blended so much, there is one I remember quite clearly. Anatoly Petrovich and I had come on a visit to my old folks bringing the children with us. We had scarcely arrived when Grandad Timofei Semyonovich pounced upon Zoya.

"And why did you tell me a fib yesterday, you little rascal?"

"What fib?"

"I asked you what you had done with my specs and you said you hadn't seen them. And afterwards I found them under the bench—It must have been you who hid them there."

Zoya frowned at Grandad and made no reply. But a little later, when they invited us to table, she said, "I won't come. If you don't believe me, I won't eat."

"Now, now! Forget it! Come and sit down."

"No, I won't sit down."

And she did not, either. And I could see that Grandad was deeply discomfited, sitting there in front of his five-year-old granddaughter. On the way back I scolded her a little, but Zoya gulped back her tears, and kept repeating: "I did not touch his spectacles. I told the truth and he did not believe me." And I felt that the child was deeply hurt.

Zoya and Father were great friends. She loved to be with him even when he was busy and had no time for her. And she did not simply follow him about, she noticed things.

"Look, Daddy can do everything," she told Shura.

True enough, Anatoly Petrovich could tackle any job. This was admitted by all who knew him. He was the eldest son in the family and had lost his father early, and from early youth he had ploughed and sown and reaped. Even so, he had found time to do a lot of work in the library and the village reading

room. The people of the village loved and respected Anatoly Petrovich, trusted him, would ask for his advice about family and other matters, and, whenever a trustworthy man for some control commission had to be chosen—to check the work of a cooperation or an association—they would say: "Anatoly Petrovich is the man! You can't take him in, he always gets to the bottom of things."

One other thing about him attracted people: his blunt honesty. If someone came to him for advice and he saw that that man was not right he would not hesitate to say:

"You're in the wrong. I will not take your side."

People far older than himself, even the village greybeards, came to him for advice.

"Anatoly Petrovich never parters with his conscience," I used to hear from many different people.

For all that, he was very modest and never boasted of his knowledge.

You could ask him about anything and get the right answer to all your questions. He had read very much and could relate what he had read clearly and well. Zoya would sit for a long time in the village reading room listening to him reading the papers to the peasants and telling them about the events through which our country was then passing, or about the Civil War, and about Lenin. His listeners were always bombarding him with questions.

"They were wonderful, Anatoly Petrovich, the things you told us about electricity, but what about the tractor—that's even more wonderful, isn't it? And how are you going to get a big thing like that to turn round on our strips of land? And yes, there's another thing: Is there really a machine that reaps and threshes and pours pure grain into the sacks?"

Once Zoya asked me, "Why does everybody love Daddy so much?"

"Well, what would you say?"

Zoya lapsed into silence, but in the evening when I was tucking her up in bed, she whispered in my ear, "Daddy is clever, he knows everything. And very kind....."

SEEING THE WORLD

When Zoya was six years old my husband and I made up our minds to go to Siberia. "To see a bit of the world!" as Anatoly Petrovich put it.

It was great fun for the children to ride to the station in a cart. And then, for the first time in their lives, they saw a locomotive.... And, oh, how they pressed to the window to see the hamlets and villages flash past, the tiny herds on the meadows, the woods and the rivers, and, at last, the rolling circling steppes. ! And, beneath the carriage floor, the ceaseless rumble of the wheels, a giddy song of travel and adventure.

Our journey took a whole week, and all this time Anatoly Petrovich and I had not a minute's respite from questions fired at us by the children: "What's that? What's that for? Why? What for?" One usually sleeps well on the road, but the children were so full of what they had seen and were seeing that it was impossible to make them lie down in the daytime. Towards the evening Shura grew tired and fell asleep, but Zoya could not be dragged away from the window. Only when the window was painted a deep blue by the night did our girl turn round to us.

"Nothing to see just lights....." she said with a regretful sigh, and at last agreed to lie down.

On the seventh day we arrived at the town of Kansk in the Yenisei Region. The one-storied houses of the little town were built of wood, and the pavements were also wooden. We took the children to the hotel and ourselves set off for the Department of Public Education to choose a village where we, Anatoly Petrovich and I, could teach at one school. They gave us an appointment to the village of Sitkino, and we decided to waste

no time in setting out. With this decision we returned to our room in the hotel and found Shura playing alone with his bricks on the floor.

"Where is Zoya?"

"Zoya told me to sit here and said she'd go to the market to buy wax. They all chew wax here, she said."

I gasped and flew out into the street. It was only a small town, a stone's throw from the forest—what if the girl had wandered off there?

At our wits' end, Anatoly Petrovich and I walked through street after street, looking into all the yards, questioning everyone we met. We searched the market place..... Still no Zoya.

At last Anatoly Petrovich turned to me and said, "You'd better go to the hotel and wait for me there. And keep an eye on Shura. I will go to the militia."

I returned to the hotel, took my son in my arms and again went out into the street—it was more than I could do to wait in the room.

We stood there for half an hour, looking this way and that. Suddenly Shura shouted, "There's Daddy and Zoya!"

I rushed to meet them. Zoya's face was very red, and she looked awkward and a little scared. She was holding a dark chunk in her hand.

"There," she said in the kind of voice she might have used had we parted only five minutes ago. "This is wax. Only it doesn't taste nice."

It turned out that she actually had been to the market and had bought some wax, but had forgotten the road back to the hotel and did not know how to ask. She guessed wrong and wandered nearly as far as the forest. There a passer-by ("a big woman, in a shawl") took notice of her, grasped her by the hand and led her to the militia. It was there that Anatoly

Petrovich had found her. Zoya was sitting at the table drinking tea like a guest and gravely answering questions: What was her name? where had she come from and with whom? what was her father's name? and her mother's? and her brother's? She had at once explained that she must return to her brother quickly because he was still a tiny tot.

"How could you leave Shura alone?" I asked reproachfully. "After all you are a big girl, you are older, we relied on you."

Zoya stood beside her father and looked with uplifted chin from one of us to the other: "I thought I'd be back at once. I thought I would find everything here right away, like in Aspen Woods. There's no need to be angry I shan't do it again."

"Agreed," said Anatoly Petrovich, suppressing a smile. "I forgive you the first time, but don't ever go out without asking. You see how frightened your mother was."

IN SIBERIA

Our house in Sitkino stood on the high bank of a broad swift river. It made your head swim to look down over the brink, and you seemed to be floating away and away with the stream. And only a few paces off was the forest. And what a forest it was! Huge cedars, so tall that you could not see their tops even if you bent over backwards; and bushy fir trees, spruces and larches so thick that under the shade of their broad, spreading branches it was like being in a dark mysterious cave. And the tinkling stillness all round! Just a twig snapping under your foot and sometimes the cry of a startled bird—and again falls the deep, unbroken quiet of a sleepy fairyland.

I remember our first walk in the forest. All four of us went, and we soon found ourselves in a dense thicket. Shura stopped under a huge thick cedar. We had gone on further, and called to him. He did not reply. We turned round. Our little lad was still standing there, under the cedar, so small and lonely. His

eyes were wide open, and he seemed to be listening to the whispering of the forest. He had fallen under the spell of the forest, and no wonder: never before in his short life had he seen so many trees. In Aspen Woods he could have counted them all on the fingers of his hands. Somehow we managed to bring him back to life. But even afterwards, when wandering with us through the forest, he remained unusually quiet and subdued: the forest seemed to have bewitched him.

Before he went to sleep that night, Shura stood for a long time gazing through the window.

"What's up, Shura? Why don't you go to bed?" his father asked him.

"I was saying good night to the trees," Shura murmured in reply.

Zoya too came to love the forest. Walking and playing in it became her greatest joy. Taking a basket for berries, she would run off happily down the house steps.

"Don't go far," I would call after her. "You heard what the neighbours said? There are wolves and bears in the forest."

And indeed, it was not altogether safe to go gathering raspberries: an encounter with a bear who has a sweet tooth is highly probable in a thick raspberry bush. But the raspberries were big and juicy, and sweet like honey. People used to go gathering them with buckets, in a big crowd, and usually one of the men would carry a gun, in case they came across a bear. The Siberian folk used to gather bilberries and bird cherries, and would store up mushrooms for the whole winter—there was great plenty in the forest, and Zoya would always return proudly from her wanderings with a full basket.

She and Shura would also go to the river for water—Zoya loved that too. Very neatly and deliberately, she would draw the water in a little bucket, and then stand on the bank and look at the bright, fast-flowing waves. And afterwards she would

stand on the steps or at the window, still looking thoughtfully down towards the river.

Once Anatoly Petrovich decided to teach Zoya to swim. Taking her with him he swam away from the bank and then suddenly let her go. Zoya went under, popped up again and again went under.....

Standing there on the bank I hardly knew if I were dead or alive. True, Anatoly petrovich, an excellent swimmer, was swimming alongside, and of course there was no fear of the girl's drowning, but, for all that, it was frightening to watch her gasping for air and going under the water time and again. But I remember that she did not cry out once—in silence she splashed and struggled for all she was worth. Then her father caught hold of her and towed her back to the bank.

"Good girl! She'll swim in two more tries," he said confidently.

"Were you frightened?" I asked, rubbing her dry.

"Yes," she admitted.

"Shall we try again?" asked her father slyly.

"Let's!" said Zoya firmly.

WINTER

The snowy Siberian winter arrived. The river was locked with ice, the frosts reached 57°C. below zero, but there was no wind, and the children easily endured the cold.

I remember how overjoyed they were by the first snow, how they played tirelessly at snowballs; how they rolled, as if they were still haymaking, in the soft downy snowdrifts which had rapidly piled up round the house; how they made a huge snowman taller than Zoya herself. I could hardly get them in for dinner—they came back with glowing cheeks and fell ravenously on their porridge and milk and rye bread.

We bought the children winter boots of the kind worn in

Siberia; Anatoly Petrovich built a fine sledge; and every day Zoya and Shura spent hours tobogganing, shooting down the hill at breakneck speed. Now they would pull each other along, now they would sit on the sledge together, Zoya in front, Shura behind, gripping his sister with his short chubby arms in red mittens.

My husband and I were busy the whole day. When I left the house of a morning, I used to tell Zoya. "Don't forget: there's porridge in the stove and milk in the pot. See that Shura behaves himself. Don't let him sit on the table, or he will fall off and hurt himself and start crying. Be good, play together and don't quarrel."

And in the evening when we returned home from school Zoya would greet us with the words, "Everything is all right! We were good!"

The room is in complete disorder, but the children's faces are so happy and content that you have not the heart to scold them. A two-storied house, I see, has been erected from chairs and boxes piled on top of one another and covered with a blanket. The most unexpected things turn up in the most unlikely places: I almost tread on my husband's shaving mirror, and the next moment he trips over an upturned saucepan. In the middle of the room, in a heap with my cups and a plate, are the children's simple toys: a tin soldier, a horse on wheels with his mane half torn off, a one-armed doll, some papers, ribbons, blocks of wood.

"Today we have not broken anything," Zoya reports. "Only Shura scratched Manya on both cheeks. She cried a bit, but I gave her some jam and she stopped. Mum, tell Shura not to fight any more or we shan't play with him again."

Shura, who really is growing up into a little bantam, looks at me guiltily.

"I won't do it again ... I didn't mean to scratch her," he says rather uncertainly.

We used to spend long evenings grouped round the table or near the stove, where the fire blazed cheerfully away. They were good evenings, they were! But even then we could not devote our time entirely to our children: I, and especially Anatoly Petrovich, had a lot of work left over to do in the evenings. And our children came to know the meaning of the word "work" at an early age.

"Mummy's working .. Daddy's working ..."

That meant complete quiet, which one must not disturb with quarrelling or questions or banging and running about. Sometimes the children would crawl under the table and play quietly there—you would not hear a sound from them for hours. As once in Solovyanka, a snowstorm would howl at the window, whining among the branches of the thick pine tree which grew just by the house, singing its plaintive and mournful song in the chimney. But in Solovyanka I had been alone, while here was Anatoly Petrovich, reading a book or checking his pupils' exercises, and Zoya and Shura, pottering about and whispering quietly. Yes, we were a loving, happy family!

Many years later, when they were already at school, my children loved to recall those evenings in the faraway Siberian village. True, while we were living at Sitkino Shura was too small—he was only four and a half—and his memories, though pleasant, had grown rather confused. But Zoya remembered those evenings clearly and vividly.

Finishing my work or laying it aside until it was time for the children to go to bed, I would draw up closer to the fire, and our "evening" would begin.

"Tell us a story," the children would ask.

"What is there to tell? You know all the fairy tales by heart already."

"That doesn't matter. Tell us something!"

And then it would start: the Golden Cockerel and Ko.obok, Grey Wolf and Tsarevich Ivan, Sister Alyonushka and Brother Ivanushka. Who did not visit us on those long winter evenings! But their greatest favourite was the tale of Vasilisa the Beautiful.

"Once upon a time...." I would repeat for almost the hundredth time, and Zoya and Shura would look at me as if they had never heard the story before.

Sometimes Anatoly Petrovich would tear himself away from his work and join in the conversation, and the children would listen to his stories with special interest. This quite often happened unexpectedly. Sometimes when the children seemed to have forgotten all about us grownups, and were sitting in the corner quietly discussing their own affairs, Anatoly Petrovich would suddenly push his books aside, go over to the stove, sit down on the low bench next to it, take Shura onto one knee, Zoya onto the other, and unhurriedly begin, "And I remember on that score . . ."

And the children's faces would light up at once with curiosity and expectation: What story had Father in store for them?

I remember one such occasion. The children had heard a lot of talk of how the river would flood in the spring. In these parts floods were no joke: they would carry away houses, drown the cattle and submerge whole villages for several days. We newcomers had heard a good deal about these terrible floods.

"What shall we do then?" Shura asked Zoya once, after listening to such talk.

"We shall leave home, get into a boat and float. Or we'll run away into the hills."

A minute was spent in thoughtful silence.

"The water will come and drown everything," said Zoya, shivering as if from cold. "Shura, are you afraid?"

"What about you?"

"I'm not."

"Well, neither am I."

Shura stood up, walked about the room unhurriedly, imitating his father, and added aggressively, "Let the flood come! I'm not afraid! I'm not afraid of anything!"

And at that point Anatoly Petrovich put in his usual, "And I remember on that score. . ." and told this story:

"Some sparrows were sitting on a branch and quarrelling about which one of the beasts was the most terrible.

"The most terrible of all is the ginger cat," said a sparrow without a tail. Last autumn the cat had nearly caught him - the sparrow had just managed to escape, but had lost his tail, all the same.

"Boys are worse," said another sparrow, 'they rob our nests and shoot us with slingshots.....'

"You can fly away from little boys," a third sparrow piped up, 'but there is no escape from the black kite. He is the most terrible of all'

"And at that moment a very young and yellow-beaked sparrow chirruped out (Anatoly Petrovich began to talk in a thin voice), 'But I am not afraid of anything! I don't care about the cats or little boys or black kites! I'll eat them all up myself!'

"And while he was chirruping a big bird flew over the branch and cawed loudly. The sparrows nearly died of fright. Some of them flew away at top speed, others hid themselves in the leaves, but the bold little sparrow, frightened out of his wits, dropped to the ground and hopped across the grass. The big bird snapped his beak and hurled himself at the little sparrow, and the poor little fellow tore along as fast as he could go, and dived into a rat hole.

"And there, curled up in a ball, slept an old hamster rat. The sparrow got even more frightened, but decided: 'Well, he'll eat me if I don't eat him first!' And he gives the hamster a peck on the nose! 'What's this?' says the hamster in surprise and opens one eye (Anatoly Petrovich screwed up his eyes, yawned, and

went on in a deep bass voice). 'Oh, it's you? Hungry, are you? Here, have a peck of grain.'

"The little sparrow felt ashamed of himself, and began to complain to the hamster, 'The black kite wanted to eat me!'

" 'Huh, the villain!' said the hamster. 'Well, come on, let's have a talk with him ' "

"The hamster rat started to climb out of his hole, and the little sparrow hopped along behind. He was very frightened and sorry and vexed: What ever had he boasted for? The hamster climbed out of his hole, and the little sparrow peeped out after him and gasped in horror. Just in front of him sat a big black bird, looking at him threateningly. The little sparrow took one glance and fell right over with fright. And the black bird cawed, and all the sparrows laughed! 'Because it was not the black kite at all, but Old Auntie.....' "

"Crow!" shouted Zoya and Shura in one voice.

"Of course it was a crow. 'Now, you little braggart,' said the hamster to the sparrow, 'what you need is a good trouncing for your boasts! Well, let it pass, bring me some grain and my winter coat, it seems to be getting rather cold ' "

"The hamster put on his winter coat and began to whistle tunes. The sparrow was the only one who wasn't very cheerful. In his shame he crept into the thickest bush he could find."

"That's the way it goes," Anatoly Petrovich added after a pause. "Now drink your milk and go to bed."

The children stood up reluctantly.

"Was the story about me?" asked Shura sheepishly.

"The story was about a sparrow," answered his father, hiding a smile.

Many years later I chanced upon that tale in the works of Alexei Tolstoy. As a boy Anatoly Petrovich had apparently read it in a children's magazine and remembered it almost word for word.

AN INDELIBLE IMPRESSION

"Mummy," Zoya said one day, "why have the Burmakins such a big house, and a lot of sheep and cows and horses? Why should one man have so much of everything? Why is it that the Ruzhentsovs, who have so many children and a granny and a grandad, live in a wretched little hut and have no cows or even sheep?"

That was my first talk with Zoya of poverty and wealth, of justice and injustice. It was not easy for me to answer a question to a six-year-old girl. To explain to her seriously I should have had to talk about a lot of things which she was not then able to understand. But life soon forced us to return to this question.

In the year 1929 seven village Communists were murdered by the kulaks in our district. The news spread quickly through Sitkino. I was standing on the front doorstep when the seven coffins were carried through the street. A band followed behind playing the stern and solemn revolutionary funeral march. In its wake came a long stream of people, their faces dark with grief and wrath.

I happened to look round at our window and saw Zoya's pale frightened face pressed against the windowpane. A second later she ran outside, gripped me by the hand and, pressing close, stood for a long time looking after the funeral procession.

"Why were they killed? Who are the kulaks? Are you a Communist? And is Daddy a Communist? Will they kill you? And have they found the ones who killed them?"

Both Zoya and Shura kept on asking these questions. The funeral of the seven Communists left an indelible impression on our minds.

There was one other unforgettable memory.

In the village club they often used to show films, and from time to time I took Zoya and Shura there. But it was not the pictures that attracted the children and me to the club.

Whenever the club was full of people, someone would always ask with a lilt in his voice, stressing the "o" in the Siberian manner, "How about a song?"

And always, several voices would respond, "Strike up!"

Their singing was wonderful. Old Siberian songs and songs of the Civil War were rendered with great feeling. Days long past lived again in those broad, rolling tunes; great and stormy events, and brave stern men rose up before us. The voices were deep and strong. Up above the big choir pealed a young high tenor, or, deep and mighty, a real taiga bass would fill the room with a wave of sound, gripping your heart with such pure melody that at times your eyes would fill with tears.

Zoya and Shura used to join in the singing. We were especially fond of one song. I cannot remember all the words to it. Only the tune and the last four lines have remained in my memory.

Night passed. Blew gentle winds of dawn.

A bright spring day was nighing.

And in the warm and sunlit morn

A partisan was dying.

The deep voices of the men would repeat, slowly and sorrowfully:

And in the warm and sunlit morn

A partisan was dying.

OUR FIRST PARTING

A year passed. There was no flood in the spring, and the children seemed not a little disappointed when they learnt that they would not have to run away into the hills. In their heart of hearts they had been hoping that the river would sweep away everything, while they, in a little boat or on foot, would make for the hills, would rush headlong towards the most impossible adventures.

The earth was green again, and flowers bloomed in the tall thick grass. In May I received a letter from my sister Olga and brother Sergei in Moscow

"Come to Moscow," they wrote, "you can live with us for the time being, and then you can find work and a place to live. We miss you, we want to see you and shall keep on inviting you."

We, too, were longing to see our own parts and our own people again, and as soon as the school year was over we left Siberia. We decided to take the children to Aspen Woods to spend some time with Grandma and Grandad.

So again we saw the broad road, the fields sown with rye, the ravine on the edge of the village, the lonely willows in the truck gardens and the thick bushes of lilac, the old hollow birch and the shapely ash tree by my father's house. And as I looked at these scenes, so near and dear to me, I realized how much a year must mean in a child's life, for our old house, and the meadow in front of the windows, and the brook, and our friends and relations had all been forgotten, and they would have to get to know it all again.

"How they have grown!" Grandma kept on repeating affectionately. "Do you remember me, you Siberians?"

"Yes, Granny," they answered uncertainly, trying nevertheless to keep closer to me.

Shura, however, soon found his feet: an hour or two after his arrival he was already playing in the street with a band of his old friends.

But Zoya did not lose her shyness so quickly, and kept following me about. Late that summer Anatoly Petrovich and I began to prepare for our journey to Moscow "Without us?!" Zoya asked in despair, and her voice was full of dismay, surprise and reproach.

Our first separation grieved us all. But we had decided not to take the children to Moscow until we had arranged things there and found a flat. And so, for the first time in our lives, we had to part.

A YEAR LATER

"Zoya! Shura! Where have you got to? Come quickly. Mummy's arrived!" I heard a familiar excited, joyful voice.

"Why, we were beginning to lose hope of ever seeing you," said Grandma Mavra Mikhailovna, taking me in her arms. "The children are homesick. Especially Zoya. She is a big girl now—you won't know her. She's so restless. She was afraid you would never come."

"Well, how was the journey?" asked my father, addressing his remark half to me and half to the carter, who was unharnessing the horse.

"Good enough, but raining all the way. Lyubov Timofeyevna here has got herself a bit wet. And I was driving the horse for all I was worth, to get your daughter here quickly. So now, Timofei Semyonovich, you'll have to stand me a spot of something."

While the kindly, talkative carter was unharnessing the horse, my father unloaded my simple belongings, and the neighbour's boy dashed off to find Zoya and Shura. Grandma had already lighted the samovar and was bustling round the table. Neighbours began coming in as soon as they heard that Timofei Semyonovich's daughter, the one who used to teach the village children at school, had arrived from Moscow.

"How's life in Moscow? How are you getting on, fit and well? And how is Anatoly Petrovich? We are all in the collective farm now, almost the whole village. Not many individual farmers are left, we're all in the kolkhoz now."

"And how are you doing?"

"Fair enough. If we do our work we won't be so badly off!"

There was so much news that I had not the time to be surprised at each separate piece. How everything had changed! I was hardly inside the house and had already heard so much that was new! Tractors of which Aspen Woods had only recently

heard as a kind of miracle, had already appeared, and even combines. The first day the extraordinary new machines arrived, they said, the whole village had turned out to stare at them.

"It's sheer joy to watch them work!" I hear. "Just think, they cleared a whole field in one day!"

"Now, folks, you with your news are not giving the girl a chance to rest after her journey!" chimes in my father jealously.

"That's right, have a nice rest, Lyubov Timofeyevna. We'll tell you all about it later," responds someone awkwardly.

To be quite honest, I was not listening very attentively to the news, however surprising. I was brimming over with impatience to know where my children were. Where had they got to?

I went out into the garden, where every branch, every leaf still trembled, letting fall occasional drops of rain. As I looked about me I was steeped in memories.

The old house had been burnt down in 1917, and this new one was considered the finest in the village. Its log walls were boarded and painted a dark-cherry colour; the windows and the high porch were decorated with carving. Our house seemed especially tall because it stood on a mound, and there were quite ten steps up to the porch. In the last years the front garden had spread out, and the slightly faded walls of the house could hardly be seen now behind the acacia and lilac bushes. My favourite poplars and birch trees had grown even taller. They were lovely, washed clean by the rain. The sun peeped out, and sparkling rainbows glowed in the last drops clinging to the leaves.

I had watered that lilac and acacia myself some thirteen years ago, when I was a young lass. There was no recognizing them now—the bushes had grown up into a solid wall. And I had grown up too and was the mother of two children.

But where were they, those children of mine?

And then I saw them. There was a band of children tearing down the road, with Zoya at their head and Shura bringing up the rear, hardly managing to keep up.

Zoya was the first to see me.

"Mama! Mama has come!" she shouted, and dashed up to me.

We hugged each other hard

Then I turned to Shura. He was standing quite near, under a tree, staring at me. On meeting my glance he suddenly grasped the trunk of a young ash and began to shake it for all he was worth. Raindrops showered down on us. Shura was thoroughly upset by this. He flung both his arms round me and buried his face in my dress.

We were in a ring of ruddy, sunburnt boys and girls—black-haired and flaxen, freckled and without freckles, with scratched hands and legs. You could see at once that they were a hardy lot, fond of running about, swimming and climbing trees. They were all neighbours' children—Shura Podymov, Sanya and Volodya Filatov, chubby Shura Kozharinova and her little brother Vasya, Yezhik and Vanya Polyanski. And they were all surveying me with shy curiosity

"I shan't be playing any more today! 'Cause Mama has come!" announced Zoya solemnly

And the children trailed away to the garden gate.

Taking Zoya and Shura by the hand I went indoors with them, to Grandad and Grandma, who were already waiting for us at the table.

When you live constantly with your children the changes which take place in them are not so noticeable and surprising. But now, after a long separation, I could not take my eyes off my children and was finding something new in them every minute

Zoya had grown very much. She had become quite thin, and her big grey eyes seemed to glow in her dark face. Shura had stretched up and grown thinner too, but he was very strong for his six years: he could carry a pail of water from the well without

difficulty, and used to help Grandma when she was washing—by carrying the big bath of linen to the brook.

"Our Shura's quite a man," said Grandmother, looking at him proudly.

At first the children followed me everywhere, not letting me out of sight for a minute

"We shall be leaving with you? You won't leave us behind any more?" they kept demanding, looking at me hard.

"Is it really so bad here?"

"No, but it's so lonely without you. And without Daddy. Please, don't leave us behind any more! You'll take us, won't you? Say you will!"

During that winter Zoya and Shura had had scarlet fever. They did not meet their friends for about three months; their only company had been Grandad and Grandma. No wonder the children had acquired a "grown-up" manner of speaking. And it was funny to hear how solemnly and weightily Zoya talked.

"Little boys should not smoke," she told the boys next door, in weighty, measured tones, just like Grandma. "Isn't there enough trouble without your setting the house on fire?"

Another time I heard her say to a friend.

"Paranya, what are you speaking like the backwoods folk for? You should try and listen how grownups talk."

Once Shura happened to break a cup and did not own up. Zoya looked straight at him and frowned.

"Why didn't you tell the truth? You should never lie!" she reproved him severely from the height of her eight short years.

Not a day apart did we spend that summer. We walked across the fields together, and down to the brook, together we helped Grandma with the house, and we even slept side by side. And we just could not reach the end of all we had to say to each other.

"Will I go to a Moscow school in the autumn?" asked Zoya. "Won't they laugh at me for reading badly? They'll say: you can see she is from the country, hark how she reads! You tell them that I was ill all the winter. Don't forget to tell them that, will you?"

"I shall go to school too," said Shura. "I don't want to be left alone. I want to go with Zoya."

They had become even closer friends. Even before, they had rarely complained of one another. Now they made up all their quarrels and disagreements between themselves. They always made peace quickly after a tiff, and would always stand up for one another.

Grandma told me this story. Not long before my arrival, brother Sergei's wife and her children, Nina and Valery, had visited Aspen Woods. The days were hot and the nights stuffy. It was decided that Anna Vladimirovna and her children should spend the night in the hayloft. Zoya and Shura went there too. They lay down to sleep. And suddenly Shura who was lying near the edge decided it would be fun to frighten the guests. He covered his head and dived into the hay..... and the stillness of the night was broken by a mysterious hissing.

"Mum, do you hear? It's a snake!" said Nina, in a frightened whisper.

"Nonsense. It can't be."

Shura burst out laughing, waited a little, and the hissing began again. Realizing what was going on, Auntie Anya said strictly:

"Shura, you are keeping us awake! Go back to your room and hiss there, if you want to."

Shura went obediently to the house. Zoya got up to follow him.

"Zoya and where are you off to? You stay here."

"No, now you have sent Shura away, I won't stay either," answered Zoya.

And it was always like that: they always stood up for each other. But this did not prevent Shura from shouting angrily sometimes, when Zoya told him off:

"Go away! Let me alone! I'll do as I like!"

"No, you won't, I won't allow it!" Zoya would answer calmly.

TOGETHER AGAIN

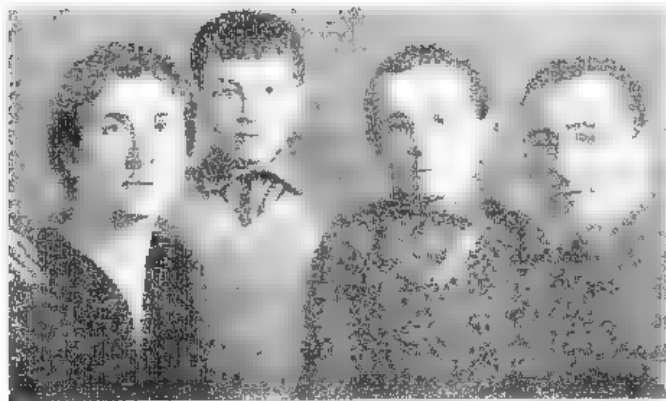
At the end of August we arrived in Moscow. Anatoly Petrovich met us at the station. The children jumped out of the carriage almost before anyone, and rushed over to their father. Then they stopped. After all, they had not seen their father for a whole year, and of course they felt awkward.

But Anatoly Petrovich understood their embarrassment. He swept them both up into his arms and, although he was always restrained and undemonstrative, kissed the children hard, stroked their short hair, and said, just as if they had only parted yesterday:

"Well, now I will show you Moscow. Let's see if it's anything like our Aspen Woods."

We got into a tram—what a bold new experience that was!—and rode rumbling and clanging round Moscow, past the tall houses, past motorcars, past the hurrying pedestrians. The children took in the sights with their noses glued to the windowpane.

Shura was quite dumbfounded to see such a lot of people in the street. "Where are they all going? Where do they live? Why are there so many of them?" he shouted, forgetting all restraint and arousing smiles among the passengers. Zoya was silent but one could read the same eager longing in her face. faster, faster! We want to see everything, know everything about this huge, wonderful new town!



As soon as Zoya and Shura arrived in Moscow Anatoly Petrovich took them to the photographer's. "We must have our photograph taken to celebrate our reunion", he said. In the photo (left to right) are Lyubov Timofeyevna, Zoya, Shura and Anatoly Petrovich. Zoya was eight then, Shura six

And at last we reached the outskirts of Moscow, a small house near the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. We went up to the second floor and entered a small room: a table, beds, a small window. We were home!

...Of all the memorable days in the life of a man the day when he takes his child to school for the first time is one of the happiest. Probably all mothers remember it. I remember it too. That 1st of September 1931 was a clear, cloudless day. The trees round the Timiryazev Academy were all golden. Dry leaves rustled under our feet, whispering something mysterious and cheering—they must have been saying that from now on my children would be leading an entirely new life.

I led the children by the hand. They walked along, grave and solemn and, no doubt, a little frightened. In her free hand Zoya had firm hold of a schoolbag, in which lay an ABC book, notebooks ruled with slanting lines and squares, a box of pencils. Shura had very much wanted to carry this wonderful case, but

Zoya had got it by seniority. In thirteen days' time Zoya would be eight years old, and Shura was barely seven.

Of course Shura was very small, but, nevertheless, we had decided to send him to school. He was very used to being with Zoya and could not even imagine how it would be if Zoya went to school and he stayed at home. And anyway there was no one to leave him with: Anatoly Petrovich and I were both working.

My children's first schoolteacher was myself. I was in charge of the preparatory grade, and the school principal sent Zoya and Shura to me.

And so we went into the classroom. Thirty boys and girls, no bigger than my two children, stood up to meet us. I put Zoya and Shura on the same bench, not far from the board, and began the lesson.....

In those first days, I remember, one little fellow took it into his head to hop round Zoya on one foot, singing: "Zoya, Zoya, she's so thin, she fell into the rubbish bin!" He bawled out the silly words with real delight. Zoya listened in silence, quite impassively, and when the lad stopped for a moment to draw breath, she said calmly:

"I did not know you were so stupid."

The boy blinked bewilderedly, repeated his ditty once or twice, but no longer with the same enthusiasm, and then left Zoya alone altogether.

Once, when Zoya was monitor, someone broke a window in the classroom. I had no intention of punishing the offender: I don't think there is a person alive who has not broken at least one window sometime in his life. Without that there would be no childhood. Shura, for one, broke more windowpanes than any other boy of my acquaintance.

I did not enter the classroom at once, and stood in the corridor thinking over how to begin talking to the children, and hoping

that the culprit would confess of his own free will. And then I heard Zoya's voice:

"Who broke it?"

I peeped into the classroom quietly. Zoya was standing on a chair, and the children were crowding round her.

"Who broke it? Speak up!" Zoya demanded. "I can tell by the eyes, anyhow," she added with deep conviction in her voice.

A short silence followed, then Petya Ryabov, with fat cheeks and snub nose, one of the chief troublemakers of the class, said with a sigh, "It was me.. "

Apparently he really did believe that Zoya could read most of his secret thoughts in his eyes. She had said it like that, as if there were not a shadow of doubt about her ability to do so, but there was, in fact, a very simple story behind her words. Grandma Mavra Mikhailovna would always say to her grandchildren when they had done something wrong: "Who did that? Now then, look me in the eyes, I can tell everything by looking into your eyes!"—and Zoya had remembered Grandma's wonderful method of discovering the truth.

Soon Zoya and Shura had to be transferred from my class to another, and this is why.

Zoya behaved herself very restrainedly and never rubbed in our relationship. Sometimes she even called me Lyubov Timofeyevna, thus emphasizing that in class she was the same as all the other pupils, and that for her, just as for all the others, I was a teacher. But Shura carried on in quite a different manner. During the lesson, having waited for a moment of complete silence, he would suddenly hail me, "Mama!"—followed by a sly look round.

Shura's sallies usually called forth confusion in the class: teacher Lyubov Timofeyevna, and Suddenly—mama?! The children thought this very funny, but it hindered their work. And after a month I had to transfer my children to the teacher in the parallel class.

School and schoolwork gained complete possession of Zoya. As soon as she had come home and had something to eat, she would sit down to her homework. We never had to remind her to do so. The most important and interesting thing, the thing which occupied all her thoughts now, was study. She wrote out every letter, every figure with extreme care, and picked up her notebooks and exercise books as carefully and lovingly as if they were alive.

When the children used to sit down to their lessons Zoya would ask severely:

"Shura, are your hands clean?"

At first he attempted to rebel.

"What business is it of yours? Leave me alone!"

But afterwards he gave up, and before taking hold of schoolbooks he would go and wash his hands, without waiting to be reminded. The precaution, I must say, was a necessary one: after he had been playing with his boys our Shura usually came back from the yard up to his ears in mud. Sometimes you just could not understand how he had contrived to make himself so dirty. It was as if he had rubbed himself first in sand, then in coal, then in whitewash, then in brick dust.. ..

The children prepared their lessons at the dinner table. Zoya would sit over her books for hours. Half an hour was Shura's limit. He wanted to be out in the street with the boys. And he would keep on sighing and shooting glances at the door.

One evening he pulled out a bundle of bricks and matchboxes, and carefully laid them out in a row, thus walling off one half of the table.

"That's your half, this is mine," he declared to Zoya. "Don't dare to come over onto my side!"

"But what about the ABC book? And the inkwell?" asked Zoya in bewilderment.

Shura was not to be put off.

"You can have the ABC and I'll have the inkwell!"

"Stop playing about!" said Zoya severely, and promptly removed the bricks from the table.

But it didn't suit Shura's fancy to prepare lessons without a bit of fun, and he always tried to turn homework into a game. What could you do about it! After all, he was not seven yet.

A HOLIDAY

On November 7, anniversary day of the October Revolution, my children were out of bed before it was light: Father had promised to take them to the demonstration, and they had been waiting for this day with great impatience.

They finished their breakfast in record time. Anatoly Petrovich began shaving. The children just could not wait for him to finish. In vain did they try to occupy themselves somehow.

At last we put on our coats and went out into the street. It was a windy day, not very pleasant, light rain was falling mixed with snow.... But we had not gone ten paces before we heard ahead of us the noise of the festivities: music, songs, talk, laughter. The nearer we came to the centre of the town the more noisy and cheerful the streets became. Luckily, the rain soon stopped; as for the grey sky, neither children nor grownups noticed it—there were so many blazing scarlet banners and bright colours all round.

At the sight of the first procession of demonstrators Zoya and Shura went wild with delight and did not stop rejoicing until the end of the demonstration. They read out every placard loudly, although some of the words did make them stumble, joined in every chorus and began to dance to the music of every band. They did not simply walk—they were carried along by the full warm wave of rejoicing, with glowing cheeks and shining eyes, their caps falling off the backs of their heads (they had to keep looking upwards!), their talk a series of exclamations.

"Look, look! How pretty! What a star! Over there, over there! There go the balloons! Look now!"

When we reached the Red Square the children grew quieter, turned their heads to the right, and then their eyes never wavered from the Mausoleum.

"Mama, who is that there?" asked Shura, speaking in a whisper for some reason, and pressing my hand as tight as he could. "Is Stalin there? And Voroshilov? And Budyonny?"

The Red Square! How much thought and feeling was linked with those words! How we had dreamed in Aspen Woods of the day when we should see it! The most wonderful place on earth! The place held sacred by millions of people throughout the world! A year ago, when I arrived in Moscow for the first time, I went to the Red Square. Although I had heard and read so much about it I had never imagined that it was so simple and so magnificent. Now, at this solemn moment, it seemed quite new to me....

I see the battlements of the Kremlin Wall, the sombre, pensive fir trees by the graves of the heroes of the revolution, the immortal name—LENIN—on the marble slabs

An endless stream of people keeps on flowing in a hot wave round the severe, simple walls of the Mausoleum. And it seems to me that all the faith, all the hope and love of humanity is surging hither in an endless flood, to the great beacon which points the way into the future.

In our column someone shouted loudly:

"Long live Comrade Stalin!"

Joseph Stalin smiled and waved his hand. A mighty "hurrah" echoed over the square. Shura was dancing rather than walking along beside me now. Zoya skipped along too, holding tightly onto her father's hand, and waving so hard in the air with her free hand that it really did seem as if they would notice her from the plinth of the Mausoleum.

We went down to the embankment. Suddenly the sun peeped out from behind a cloud, and the towers and cupolas of the Kremlin were reflected in the river in quivering streaks of colour and gold. By the bridge we saw a balloon peddler. Anatoly Petrovich went up to him and bought three red and two green balloons—they made a lovely bright bunch. He gave one balloon to Zoya and one to Shura.

"And what shall we do with the others?" he asked.

"Let them go!" Zoya cried.

And as we walked along Anatoly Petrovich began to release one balloon after another. They floated upwards, smoothly and gently.

"Let's watch them!" shouted Zoya and Shura.

Other people stopped too, grownups and children. And we stood for a long time with our heads back, watching our gay bright balloons as they floated away into the clearing sky, growing smaller and finally disappearing from view.

OUR EVENINGS

Some years ago I happened to read a letter written by a man who had spent a lot of time and trouble on his children, but who, when they grew up, had suddenly realized that he had brought them up badly. "What was my mistake?" he asked, turning the past over in his memory. And he recalled that he had not taken notice of a quarrel between the children; that he had done for the child things the child could well have done himself; that when he had brought them presents he had said, "This is for you, and that is for you," whereas it would have been better to say, "This is for both of you"; that he had often forgiven lies and carelessness, and had nagged at them for petty misdemeanours. "It seems I missed the moment when selfishness and the desire to avoid difficult tasks took root in my children," wrote this man "Great harm grew out of mere

trifles: my children did not grow up at all as I would have liked to see them. They are rude, selfish, lazy and do not get on with each other."

"What must I do?" he asked at the end of his letter. "Leave the rest to society, to the collective? But then, for one thing, the collective will have to divert some of its energy on correcting my mistakes. For another, it will be difficult for the children themselves in life. And thirdly, Why have I failed so dismally?"

This letter was published in one of our big newspapers, in *Prauda*, I think. I sat for a long time over those sad lines, thinking and remembering things.

Anatoly Petrovich was a good teacher. I never heard him lecturing the children, or telling them off for long. He educated them by his own conduct, his own attitude towards work, his own personality. And I have realized that that is the very best kind of education.

"I have no time to educate my children, I am at work all day," I hear quite often. And I think: Should one really allot special hours to educating one's own children? Anatoly Petrovich taught me to understand that there is education in everything, in your every action, glance and word. Everything educates your child: how you work and how you rest, how you talk with your friends and with people you do not like, what you are like in good and in bad health, in sadness and in joy—your child notices everything and will imitate you in everything. But if you forget about him, about his keen observant eyes always searching for advice and example in every one of your actions, if your child grows up beside you fed, shod and clothed, but alone—then nothing can help to educate him: neither expensive toys, nor holiday outings, nor strict reasoning. You must be with your child always, and he must feel your nearness to him in everything, and never have cause to doubt it.

Anatoly Petrovich and I were very busy and could spend very little time with our children. While teaching at an

elementary school I studied at a pedagogical institute. Anatoly Petrovich worked at the Timiryazev Academy, taking courses in shorthand and working hard to begin external studies at a technical institute—a long-treasured dream of his. We often arrived home so late that we found the children already asleep. But we had all the more pleasure from the off days and evenings which we spent together.

As soon as we appeared at the door the children would rush up to us and deluge us with everything they had been storing up during the day. It would not come out very coherently, but noisily and with feeling.

"Akulina Borisovna's puppy got into the larder and knocked the soup over! I've learnt the poem already! Zoya's been onto me again! Yes, and why doesn't he do his sums? Look what we've cut out. Lovely, isn't it? And I've taught the pup how to beg, he has nearly learnt already!"

Anatoly Petrovich would quickly sort everything out. He would discover why the sums had not been done, listen to the poem that Zoya had learnt, ask about the puppy and casually remark:

"That's a rude way of speaking, sonny. What kind of expression do you call that: 'Zoya's been onto me'? I can't stand people who talk like that."

Then we all have supper together, the children help me to clear away—and the long-awaited time arrives.... ..

It would seem that there was nothing special to wait for. Everything was usual and ordinary. Anatoly Petrovich would be looking through his shorthand notes, I would be preparing tomorrow's lessons, Zoya and Shura had their drawing books in front of them.

The lamplight falls only on the table round which we are sitting, and the rest of the room is in darkness. The only sounds in the room are the creak of the chair under Shura and the rustle of a drawing book.

Zoya is drawing a house with a tall green roof. Smoke is coming out of the chimney. Nearby stands an apple tree with round apples on it, each the size of a football. Sometimes there are birds and flowers, and in the sky, in the region of the sun, a five-pointed star.....Across the pages of Shura's album horses, dogs, cars, airplanes career in all directions. The pencil in Shura's hand never trembles—he draws sure, straight lines. The realization came to me early that Shura had a knack for drawing.

And so we sit, each of us occupied with his own work, and wait for Anatoly Petrovich to say:

"Well, now let's have a rest!"

That means that we shall now have a game of something. More often than not, we play at dominoes; Zoya and Father against Shura and me. Shura watches every move keenly, loses his temper, quarrels, and when losing flushes, gets angry and is ready to cry. Zoya too gets excited, but silently: she only bites her lip or doubles up her free hand into a fist.

Sometimes we play a game called "Up and Down." Here nothing depends on skill but only on how the die falls. If you are lucky you soar upwards on an airplane right to the goal, a many coloured cupola, and if not, you slide down and lose. Easy, but oh, how thrilling! And how the children clap their hands when they are lucky enough to fly upwards, covering a dozen squares on the brightly coloured board.

Zoya and Shura were also fond of the game which I invented, and which we called simply "Scrawling": one of them would draw on a clean sheet of paper any zigzag, crooked line or scribble to represent a "scrawl," and I had to discover in the senseless jumble the seed of a future picture.

Now Shura has produced something like an elongated egg. I look at it, think for a moment, then add to it fins, a tail, scales, eyes and before us lies....

"A fish! A fish!" shout the children in delight.

And now Zoya drops the most ordinary of ink blots on the paper, and I turn it into a beautiful flower, a spreading mauve chrysanthemum

When the children grew up a little we changed roles: I would supply the "scrawl," and they would think what to do with it. Shura was tirelessly inventive, out of a little squiggle he could build a fairy tower, from a few dots—a face, from a crooked line—a big branchy tree.

It was a very interesting and, I think, useful game: it developed observation, fantasy and imagination.

But the thing we loved most of all was when Anatoly Petrovich took up his guitar and began to play. I don't even know whether he played well, but we loved to listen to him and would forget time and all, when he played one Russian song after another.

Such evenings may have been few and far between, but they lighted up the other days, and we used to remember them with gratitude. A remark or a word of reproach spoken to the children during these hours left a deep impression in their hearts, while praise or a fond word would make them happy.

"Why, Shura, you have sat down in the best chair yourself and left Mummy the one with the broken back," said Anatoly Petrovich once, and after that I never noticed Shura take something better or more comfortable for himself and leave the worse thing for the other fellow.

Once Anatoly Petrovich came home looking sombre, and greeted the children more restrainedly than usual

"What did you beat Anyuta Stepanova for today?" he asked Shura.

"She's a sissy. . ." answered Shura sullenly, his eyes downcast.

"Let me never hear of such a thing again!" said Anatoly Petrovich clearly and sharply, and after a pause added a little

softer: "A big boy like you, almost eight years old, and hitting a girl! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

But how the children's eyes would shine when Anatoly Petrovich praised Shura for his drawings or Zoya for a neat notebook or a well-done job in the house.

When we came back late the children would go to bed without waiting for us, and would leave their copybooks open on the table so that we could see how they had done their lessons. And even if we could spare the children only a few hours we always knew all about how they lived, what they did, what they thought and what happened to them when we were away. And the main thing was that everything we did together—whether it was a game, lesson or housework—brought us nearer to the children, and our friendship grew ever deeper and more tender.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

From the highway of Staroye Shosse where we lived it was no less than three kilometres to school.

I used to get up first, prepare breakfast, feed the children, and we would leave the house while it was still dark. Our path lay through Timiryazev Park. The trees stood tall and still, just as if they had been drawn in India ink against a blue, slowly brightening background. The snow crunched under our feet, and our breath would leave a fine sprinkling of hoarfrost on the fur collars of our coats.

The three of us used to go together—Anatoly Petrovich left the house later. At first we would walk along in silence, but gradually all traces of sleepiness would melt away with the darkness, and some unexpected and interesting conversation would begin.

"Mummy," asked Zoya once, "why is it that the older trees grow the more beautiful they become, but when people grow old they are not beautiful at all?"

"That's not true!" retorted Shura hotly before I could think of an answer. "There's Granny, she's old, but isn't she beautiful? She certainly is!"

Mother... No, no one would call you beautiful now: your eyes are so tired, your cheeks so lined and hollow.....

But Shura seems to overhear my thoughts and says with deep conviction:

"Any person I love is beautiful for me."

"Yes, that's true," says Zoya after some thought.

Once when the three of us were walking together along the highway a lorry overtook us and pulled up suddenly.

"Going to school?" asked the driver, looking out at us.

"Yes," I answered, surprised.

"Well, tell the kids to hop in."

I had hardly time to look round before Zoya and Shura were in the back, and to the accompaniment of their delighted shouts the lorry moved on.

From that day right until the spring the same lorry always overtook us on the road, picked up the children and took them almost all the way to school. They would jump out at the corner and the lorry would drive on farther

We never used to wait for "our lorry." We liked to hear behind us the sound of the familiar low hooter, and the same deep voice say, "Well, hop in, kids." Of course the route of the kindly driver simply coincided with ours, but the children liked to believe that he came for us on purpose.

HOUSEWARMING

Two years after the children's arrival in Moscow Anatoly Petrovich was given another room, bigger and more comfortable, at 7, Alexandrovsky Street.

You would not know Alexandrovsky Street now: large new houses have sprung up along each side; the road and pavement

are covered with smooth asphalt. In those days there were hardly a dozen cottages here, very rural in appearance, with truck gardens and a big, desolate stretch of wasteland behind them.

Our house stood by itself, off the beaten track, as they say, and coming back from work I could see it from a good distance as soon as I stepped out of the tram. We lived on the second floor. The new room was far better than the one we had before: warmer, lighter and bigger.

The children liked their new home very much. They loved everything new, and the move gave them great pleasure. They spent much time packing. Zoya carefully collected together the books and copybooks and the pictures out of the magazines. Shura also busily assembled and packed away his belongings: bits of glass, pebbles, hooks, pieces of iron, bent nails and a lot of other things the purpose of which was a mystery to me.

In the new room we allotted a corner to the children, placed a small table there, and fitted up a shelf for schoolbooks and notebooks.

On seeing the table Shura at once shouted:

"Left side is mine!"

"And the right side is mine," agreed Zoya willingly, and as often happened, the cause for a quarrel disappeared by itself.

Our life went on as before; the days passed by in work and study. On Sundays we would explore some new part of Moscow, going either to Sokolniki or to Zamoskvorechye, or ride on tram "B" round the city, or take a walk in Neskuchni Gardens.

Anatoly Petrovich knew Moscow well, both the old and the new, and could tell us quite a lot about it.

"But where is the bridge?" asked Shura once, when we were walking up Kuznetski Bridge Street. And Anatoly Petrovich told us the interesting story of how in the old days there had been a

real bridge here and how the river Neglinka was piped and taken underground.

And so we learnt how these various "walls" and "gates" and such streets as Table Street, Tablecloth Street, Grenade Street, Armoury Street, Dog Square, had come to be in Moscow.

Anatoly Petrovich would also tell us why Presnya was called Red, why there is a Barricade Street and an Uprising Square. And page after page of the history of our wonderful city was unfolded before the children, and they learnt to understand and love its past and present.

GRIEF

It was the end of February. We had bought tickets for the circus. We did not take the children to the cinema and the circus often, and every such outing was a real treat.

The children waited for Sunday to come with an impatience that knew no bounds. They dreamed of how they would see the performing dog count up to ten, the dainty footed horse gallop round the arena, his arched neck decked with silver spangles, the learned seal flop from barrel to barrel and catch the ball thrown to him by the trainer.....

The whole week they talked of nothing but the circus. But on Saturday, when I came home from school, I was surprised to find Anatoly Petrovich already at home and in bed.

"Why are you back so early? And why are you lying down?" I asked, frightened.

"Don't worry, it will pass. I just don't feel very well, that's all."

I cannot say that this comforted me much. I could see that Anatoly Petrovich was very pale and had somehow grown thin all at once, as if he had been seriously ill for a long time. Zoya and Shura sat close by, looking at their father in alarm.

"You will have to go to the circus without me," said Father, forcing a smile.

"We won't go without you," said Zoya.

"No, we won't!" added Shura.

The next day Anatoly Petrovich grew worse. He began to feel a sharp pain in his side and develop a fever. As always restrained outwardly, he did not groan or complain, just bit his lip hard. A doctor was needed but I was afraid to leave my husband alone. I knocked at our neighbours' door but no one answered; they must have gone for a walk it was Sunday. I came back very upset, not knowing what to do.

"I will go for the doctor," said Zoya suddenly, and before I could answer, she had already put on her little coat and hat.

"You mustn't ... it's a long way off," said Anatoly Petrovich with difficulty.

"No, I will go. I know where he lives! Please!" And without waiting for an answer Zoya ran down the stairs.

"Well, let her she's a sensible girl..... she'll find him....." whispered Anatoly Petrovich, and turned away to the wall to hide his face, which was grey with pain.

An hour later Zoya returned with the doctor. He examined Anatoly Petrovich and said laconically: "Intestinal obstruction. An immediate operation is required."

He stayed with the patient while I ran for an ambulance, and half an hour later they took Anatoly Petrovich away. When they were carrying him down the stairs a sudden groan escaped him, but he checked himself as he saw the startled faces of the children.

The operation was a successful one, but Anatoly Petrovich did not feel any better. Every time I came to visit him his lifeless face frightened me. I was accustomed to seeing my husband cheerful and sociable, but now he lay silent, and only

occasionally raised a pale thin hand and placed it on mine, and just as silently and weakly squeezed my fingers.

On March 5 I came as usual to visit him.

"Wait a minute," an attendant I knew said to me in the hall, looking at me somehow strangely. "The nurse or the doctor will come out in a moment."

"But I have come to see patient Kosmodemyansky," I reminded him, thinking that he had not recognized me. "I have a permanent pass."

"Just a moment, please, the nurse will come at once," he repeated.

A minute later, a nurse entered hurriedly.

"Sit down, please," she said, avoiding my eyes.

And then I understood.

"He is.....dead?" I spoke the impossible, unbelievable words.

Silently, the nurse nodded her head.

It is bad enough to lose someone who is dear to you even when you know long before the end that his illness is fatal and you must lose him. But there is nothing more terrible than the sudden, merciless death of a loved one..... Only a week ago he, a man who had never been ill since childhood, was full of strength and the joy of life! And now, now he was in his coffin, unlike himself, silent and unresponsive.....

The children did not leave me for a minute. Zoya held my hand, Shura clung onto the other.

"Mummy, don't cry!" Zoya kept repeating, looking at her father's still face with dry red eyes.

On a cold dreary day the three of us stood together in Timiryazev Park, waiting for my brother and sister. They were to attend the funeral. We stood under a tall wintry tree, the

sharp cold wind buffeted us, and we felt lonely and abandoned.

I do not remember my relatives' arrival or how we lived through that cold, sorrowful, endless day. I can recall only vaguely how we went to the cemetery, how suddenly and with heart rending despair Zoya burst into tears, and the thud of the earth on the coffin.....

FATHERLESS

From then on my life changed abruptly. Before, I had lived knowing and feeling that by my side stood a man close and dear to me, to whom I could always turn for support. I had grown used to the calm heartening courage he gave me, and could not even imagine how it could be otherwise. And suddenly I was left all alone, with the responsibility for the fate of our two children, for their life resting completely on my shoulders.

Shura was, of course, too little to be fully aware of the calamity which had befallen us. It must have seemed to him that his father had simply gone a long way off, as had happened before, and that sometime he would come back again.

But Zoya sorrowed as acutely as a grownup.

She hardly ever spoke about Father. She would come up to me—when my thoughts would wander to Father—look into my eyes and quietly suggest, "Would you like me to read to you?"

Or she would ask, "Tell us something! About when you were little....."

Or, without saying anything, she would simply sit down beside me, her knees pressed against mine.

She did her best to make me forget my sad thoughts.

But sometimes at night I would hear her sobbing. I would go over to her and stroke her hair and ask quietly, "Is it about Father?"

And she would unfailingly answer, "No, I must have been dreaming."

Even before it happened, we had often said to Zoya: "You are older, look after Shura, help Mother." Now these words had taken on a new meaning: Zoya had really become my friend and helper.

I began teaching at two schools at once, and was able to spend even less time at home than before. I used to prepare the dinner overnight. Zoya would heat it up, feed Shura, tidy up the room and, when she was a little older, she even began to light the stove herself.

"Zoya will burn our house down!" the neighbours would exclaim. "After all she's only a child!"

But I knew that Zoya was more reliable than many a grownup. She did everything at the right time, never forgot anything, and was not a bit careless about the most trivial job. I knew that Zoya would not drop a lighted match, would close the flue in time, and would notice any coals that dropped out of the fire.

One day I came home very late with a headache and so tired that I had not the strength to start cooking. "I will prepare the dinner tomorrow," I thought, "I'll get up earlier....."

I went to sleep almost before my head touched the pillow, and woke up next day later than usual. I had to leave the house in about half an hour in order not to be late for work.

"What a nuisance!" I said, very upset. "How could I have overslept! You will have to go without a cooked meal today, children!"

When I returned in the evening, I asked the children even before I was inside the room, "Well, are you starving?"

"We're not starving, we're bursting!" shouted Shura triumphantly, dancing up and down in front of me.

"Sit down and have dinner quickly, Mummy. We've got fried fish today!" announced Zoya proudly.

"Fish? What fish?....."

There actually was fish sizzling temptingly in the frying pan! Where had it come from?

The more I wondered, the more delighted were the children.

Shura went on hopping about and shouting, and Zoya, very pleased with herself, at last explained:

"You see, when we were going to school past the pond, we looked through a hole in the ice, and there was a fish there. Shura wanted to catch it with his hand, but it was very slippery. Our nanny at school gave us a tin, and we put it into the bag for the galoshes. And on the way home we stopped for an hour by the pond and caught some fish....."

"We could have caught more, but a man chased us away from the pond," Shura put in. "He said, 'You'll drown yourselves or freeze your hands.' But we didn't!"

"We caught a lot," went on Zoya. "Then we came home, fried them, ate some ourselves and left some for you. Tasty, isn't it?"

That evening Zoya and I prepared the dinner together: she peeled the potatoes carefully, washed the groats, and watched closely how much of everything I put into the saucepan.

Later, when I recalled those first months after the death of Anatoly Petrovich, I often thought that it was then that there developed in Zoya's character that early seriousness which was apparent to anyone who came in contact with her.

THE NEW SCHOOL

Soon after the death of my husband I moved the children to School No. 201. It was too far to the other school, and I was afraid to let the children go alone. I was no longer on the staff there myself as I had begun teaching at a school for grownups.

The new school pleased the children right from the start; they fell in love with it on the first day, and just could not find

words to express their admiration. After all, they had been studying up till then in a small wooden house, like the one in Aspen Woods. But this school was big and roomy, and next door there was being built a magnificent building three stories high, with huge broad windows. That was to be their school next year.

Zoya's thrifty eye was quick to appreciate Nikolai Vasilyevich Kirikov, the principal of School No. 201.

"You should see what a hall we are going to have!" she said enthusiastically. "And the library! So many books! I've never seen so many: shelves all round the walls, from floor to ceiling and not a single blank space.... Just cramful," she added after a moment's thought (and again I heard Grandma, for "just cramful" was one of her expressions). "Nikolai Vasilyevich took us to the building site and showed us everything. He says we shall have a big garden and that we shall plant it ourselves. You'll see what a school we shall have: you won't find another like it in the whole of Moscow!"

Shura was also carried away by what was being done in the new school, but he liked the gym lessons most of all. He was never tired of telling us how he had pulled himself up on the trapeze, how he had vaulted over the horse, how he had learnt to play basketball.

They both took to their new schoolteacher Lydia Nikolayevna Yuryeva right from the first. I saw that by the way they went to school so willingly every day, the way they returned home lively and contented, the way they tried to tell me word for word everything their teacher had said—everything down to the last detail held vast significance for them.

"In my opinion, you leave too wide a margin," I said once to Zoya as I looked through her copybook.

"Oh, no!" Zoya retorted, blushing. "Lydia Nikolayevna said they should be like that, smaller ones aren't allowed!"

It was like that in all things: whatever Lydia Nikolayevna says goes. And I knew that was the way it should be. The children loved and respected their teacher. They tried to carry out all her orders and requests as best they could.

Zoya and Shura always took to heart everything that happened at school.

"Boris was late today and said, 'My mama was ill so I went to the chemist!'" related Shura heatedly. "Well, if his mother was ill, he couldn't help it. So Lydia Nikolayevna says to him, 'Go and sit down.' But after school up comes Boris' mother to take him somewhere. And we can see that she looks well and healthy and not at all ill. Lydia Nikolayevna blushed all over, got angry and says to Boris: 'What I dislike most is when people don't tell the truth. My rule is if you own up and don't lie.....that is, if you tell the truth'"—Shura corrected himself, feeling that he was beginning to give too free an interpretation of his teacher's words, " 'that means half the fault is forgiven.' And I asked: 'Why is half the fault forgiven if he owns up?' And Lydia Nikolayevna says: 'If someone owns up then it means he has understood his fault, and there is no point in punishing him severely. But if he denies his guilt, that means he doesn't understand anything and will go and do the same thing again, and that means he ought to be punished.'.... .."

If the class did their tests badly Zoya would come home with such a sad face that I would ask in alarm, "Did you get a poor mark?"

"It wasn't me," she would sadly explain. "I got a good mark, but Manya Fedotova had everything wrong. So had Nina Lyubimova too. Lydia Nikolayevna said: 'I am very sorry but I shall have to give you girls a poor mark.'.... .."

One day I returned from work earlier than usual. The children were not at home. Worried, I went to the school, found Lydia Nikolayevna, and asked her if she knew where Zoya was.

"I expect they have all gone home," she answered. "But let's look into the classroom."

We went up to the classroom door and looked through the glass panes of the door.

Zoya was standing at the board with three other girls. Two were taller than Zoya, with the same thin pigtailed; the third was short, plump and curly. They were all very serious, and the curly one even had her mouth open a little.

"What are you doing?" Zoya was saying to her with gentle reproof in her tone. "When pencils are added to pencils you get pencils. But you are adding metres to kilograms. What do you get then?"

At that moment my eye caught a white flash in the back of the classroom. I glanced in that direction. On the back bench sat Shura, quietly engaged in flying paper airplanes.

We tiptoed away from the door. I asked Lydia Nikolayevna to send Zoya home soon, and in future not to allow her to stay behind long after the lessons. In the evening I myself told Zoya that she should come home as soon as school was over.

"I tried to get away earlier today because I wanted to spend a little while with you, and you were not at home," I said to her. "Don't stay behind at school wasting time."

Zoya heard me out in silence, but afterwards, when supper was over, she suddenly demanded, "Mama, is it really a waste of time to help the other girls?"

"Why a waste of time? It is a very good thing to help a comrade."

"Then why did you say, 'Don't stay behind wasting time'?"

I bit my lip and thought (it must have been for the hundredth time) how carefully one must choose one's words when talking to children!

"I just wanted to spend some time with you. After all I am not very often free."

"But you yourself say that work comes before everything."

"That's true. But your work is also to see that Shura is fed, and he was sitting in school, hungry, waiting for you to leave."

"No, I was not hungry," chimed in Shura. "Zoya took a good lunch to school."

The next morning, when she was setting off for school, Zoya asked, "May I stay behind with the girls today?"

"But don't be long, Zoya."

"Half an hour!" she answered.

And I knew it really would be half an hour and not a minute longer.

GREEK MYTHOLOGY

I wanted to keep in our life the habits which Anatoly Petrovich had started. On our days off we used to go for walks round Moscow, as we had done when he was with us. But these walks made us feel sad. We kept on thinking of Father. In the evenings our games were a failure—we missed Father, his jokes and laughter.

One free evening, on our way home, we stopped by a jeweler's shop. The lighted window was dazzlingly bright: scarlet, blue, green and violet lights gleamed and sparkled in the precious stones. There were necklaces, brooches and sparkling trinkets. Right in front, near the pane, on a big velvet cushion lay rows and rows of rings, and in each one of them gleamed some kind of gem, and showers of many-coloured sparks seemed to be flying out of every stone, just as they do from a grinder's wheel or the arm of a tram. The strange sparkle of the jewels fascinated the children. And suddenly Zoya said, "Daddy promised to tell me why rings have jewels, but never did....."

Just as suddenly she fell silent and pressed my hand tightly, as if asking to be forgiven for reminding me of Father.

"Mum, do you know why there are jewels in rings?" interrupted Shura.

And as we walked on I told the children the story of Prometheus. The children kept looking up at me, drinking in every word, and scarcely avoiding bumping into the passers-by. The ancient legend about the Titan who for the sake of man performed an amazing feat and suffered cruel torment captured their imagination.

"And one day Hercules, an uncommonly strong and kind man, a real hero, came to Prometheus," I related. "He feared no one, not even Zeus. With his sword he severed the chains which fastened Prometheus to the rock, and freed him. But at the command of Zeus, Prometheus never parted with his chain: one of the links with a splinter of rock in it was left on his hand. Ever since that time, in memory of Prometheus, people have worn rings on their fingers with gems in them."

Several days later I brought the children a book of Greek myths from the library, and began to read it to them aloud. And strange to say, for all their interest in Prometheus, they listened to me very unwillingly at first. Apparently, the demigods, whose names were so difficult to remember, seemed to them rather cold, distant and strange. Not like their old friends: Bear Sweet-Tooth, Patrikeyevna the Fox, Grey Wolf, the foolish fisher who left his tail in the icehole, and other old friends from Russian folk tales. But little by little, the heroes of the myths found their way to the children's hearts. Shura and Zoya began to talk about Perseus, Hercules and Icarus as if they were living people.

Once, I remember, when Zoya said she felt sorry for Niobe, Shura retorted hotly, "But why did she boast?"

I knew that many more heroes of books would become near and dear to my children. I remember yet another incident.

"Fancy, you, a grownup, crying. ..." said Zoya in thoughtful wonder one day when she saw me reading *The Gadget*, by Voynich.

"Some day you too shall read this book," I answered.

"And when will that be?"

"When you are, say, fourteen."

"O-oh, that's a long time yet," said Zoya.

It was clear that such a period of time seemed terribly, almost incredibly long to her.

BOOKS THEY LOVED

We no longer played at dominoes when I had a free evening: we used to read aloud, or rather—I read and the children listened.

At first we used to read Pushkin mostly. His was a very special and much loved world, full of beauty and joy. It was quite easy to remember Pushkin's lines, and Shura was never tired of reciting about the squirrel who:

*Her little songs was always singing,
And little nuts was always cracking;
But those nuts, they were not plain—
All the shells were gold inlaid,
With real emerald inside.. ..*

And although the children learned much of Pushkin by heart, they would keep on asking:

"Mummy, please read us about the Goldfish ... about Tsar Saltan. ..."

Once I began to read them *Tyoma's Childhood*, by Garin. We reached the place where Tyoma's father whipped Tyoma because of a broken flower. The children very much wanted to know what would happen after that, but it was late and I sent them off to bed. It so happened that neither during that week nor on the following Sunday could I find time to read them the rest of the story. I had a lot of work to do, many exercises to correct and stockings to darn. At last, Zoya's patience gave way. She took the book and read the rest herself.

That was how it began. Zoya started to devour everything she could lay hands on, whether it was a fairy tale, a newspaper or a schoolbook. It was as if she were testing her ability to read like a grownup: not just a set page out of a reader, but a whole book. But if I said to her, "You are a little too young to read that, you must grow a bit first," she did not insist, and would put the book aside.

Arkadi Gaidar became our special favourite. I was amazed by his skilful way of writing in books for children about the things that really mattered. He addressed his young readers seriously, just as if he were dealing with equals, without talking down to them on account of their age. He knew that children approach everything expecting a lot: they demand that daring be utterly fearless, friendship completely wholehearted, and loyalty unconditional. The flame of lofty thought illumined the pages of his books. Like Mayakovsky, he would elevate his reader with every line, summon him not to a small and isolated happiness, but to the great and universal happiness being built in our Country. He called and taught people to fight for that happiness, to build it with their own hands.

What discussions we would have after every book of Gaidar's! We would talk of how just our revolution was, and of how different the tsarist high school was from our school; and of what bravery and discipline were. In Gaidar's books these words were filled with surprisingly simple and tangible meaning. I remember Zoya and Shura being especially struck by the story of how Boris Gorikov involuntarily brought disaster to his older friend Chubuk, just because he forgot to be careful on a reconnaissance expedition and went away for a swim without asking for permission.

"Just think! He thought he would take a swim ... and they captured Chubuk!" cried Shura.

"And Chubuk died thinking that Boris had betrayed him! Just think what Boris went through after that! I can't even

understand how you could live on knowing that your comrade has been shot because of you!" said Zoya.

We read and reread *Distant Lands*, *RVS* and *Military Secret*. As soon as a new book by Gaidar appeared I would buy it and bring it home. And it would always turn out that the book dealt with what excited and interested us most at that very moment.

"Mama, where does Gaidar live?" Zoya asked once.

"In Moscow, I think."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful to see him!"

THE NEW COAT

Shura's favourite amusement was a game of "Cossack Robbers" with the boys. Wintertime in the snow, summertime in the sand, they would dig caves, light campfires and rush with blood-curdling whoops about the streets.

One day, towards evening, there was a terrible crash in the hall, the door flew open, and on the threshold stood Shura. But in what a state! Zoya and I jumped up from our chairs. Shura stood before us smeared from head to foot in clay, hair tousled, face glistening with sweat. But we were used to all that. The terrible thing was that the buttons and pockets of his overcoat had been torn out with the cloth, and in their place gaped large jagged holes with tattered edges.

I went cold and stared at him in silence. I had only just bought that overcoat.

Still without saying a word I took the overcoat off and set about cleaning it. Shura stood there crestfallen, but at the same time an expression of obstinate indifference appeared on his face. "Well, so what!" his whole appearance seemed to be saying. He used to get moods like that sometimes, and then it was very difficult to manage him. I did not like to shout, and as I felt that I could not speak to him calmly, I did not give him a further glance, and silently went on putting the overcoat to rights. There

was not a sound in the room. About fifteen or twenty minutes went by. They seemed to me like hours.

"Mama, forgive me... I won't do it again," mumbled Shura hurriedly behind my back.

"Forgive him, Mama," echoed Zoya.

"All right," I replied without turning round.

I sat up till late at night repairing the ill fated coat. When I woke up the next day it was still dark. At the end of my bed stood Shura, waiting apparently for me to open my eyes.

"Mama, forgive me.... It will never happen again," he said in a very small and faltering voice. And although they were the same words as yesterday, they were said quite differently—with pain and real repentance.

"Did you talk to Shura about what happened last night?" I asked Zoya when we were left alone in the room.

"Yes, I did," she replied after a pause.

"What did you say to him?"

"I... I said that you had to do all the work yourself, that it's hard for you ... that you weren't angry but just thinking: What shall we do now that the overcoat is quite spoilt?"

THE CHELYUSKIN

"Do you remember Daddy's story about Sedov's expedition?" I ask Shura.

"Yes, Mother."

"Do you remember how Sedov said before he left: 'How can we go to the Pole with equipment like this! Instead of eighty dogs we have only twenty, our clothes are worn out, food is scarce.'... Remember...? Well, look here, an icebreaker is leaving for the Arctic now. What haven't they got on board! They have thought of everything—from needles to cows."

"Cows? What cows?"

"Yes, there are twenty-six live cows on board, four pigs, fresh potatoes and vegetables. I don't suppose the sailors will go hungry this trip."

"And they won't get frozen, either," adds Zoya, looking over my shoulder at the paper. "See, what a lot of everything they've got: fur clothing, and their sleeping bags are fur too, and coal and benzine and kerosene....."

"And skis!" Shura contributes, rather irrelevantly. "And sleighs, and all kinds of scientific instruments. That's equipment for you! Ooh, and guns! They will use them to shoot seals and polar bears."

I never thought then that the ship *Chelyuskin* would soon become our chief topic of conversation. The newspaper bulletins were not too numerous, or perhaps they did not catch my eye. Anyway, the news which Shura suddenly rushed in with one day took me completely by surprise.

"Mama!" shouted Shura, flushed and tousled, as he burst into the room. "The *Chelyuskin*! The ship you were telling me about! I just heard it myself.....!"

"What's happened?"

"It's been crushed. In the ice!"

"And the men?"

"They were all taken off. Right onto an iceberg. Only one man fell overboard...."

It was unbelievable. Yet it turned out that Shura had not mixed anything up—it was the talk of the whole country. On the 13th of February ("They are right about thirteen being an unlucky number!" said Shura despondently) the ice floes of the Arctic crushed the ship. Under their mighty pressure the port side caved in, and two hours later the *Chelyuskin* was swallowed up by the waves.

In the space of these two hours the men unloaded a two months' supply of food, tents, sleeping bags, an airplane and a

radio station. They took their bearings by the stars, got in touch by radio with the polar stations on the Chukotsk mainland, and immediately began to build themselves living quarters, a kitchen, a signal tower....

Soon the newspapers and radio brought more news: the Party and the Government had organized a commission for the rescue of the *Chelyuskin* crew. And without delay the whole country began to take part in the rescue work: icebreakers were hurriedly put under repair, airships and airsledges were made ready for flight.

On North Cape, at Wellen and in Providence Bay airplanes prepared to take off for the scene of the catastrophe. Dog teams set out from Wellen towards the camp. Across the ocean, right round the world, went the icebreaker *Krasin*. The steamers *Smolensk* and *Stalingrad* sailed up to latitudes which no steamer had ever reached in wintertime, and took airplanes to Cape Olyutorski.

I do not think there was a single person in the whole country whose thoughts were not with the men of the *Chelyuskin*. Zoya and Shura watched developments with bated breath. I need not have listened to the radio or read the papers—the children knew everything down to the tiniest detail, and for hours on end they would argue hotly on one subject: What are the *Chelyuskin* crew doing now? What are they thinking about? Are they afraid?

There were one hundred and four of them on the ice floe, including two children. And didn't Shura envy them!

"Why should they have all the luck? They don't understand anything: one is not two yet, and the other isn't out of its cradle. Now, if I were there....!"

"Shura, think a moment! How can you call it luck? People in such trouble, and you say 'luck'!"

Shura waved my objection aside. He cut out every line in the paper concerning the *Chelyuskin* men. He drew nothing but the North: ice floes and the camp—as he saw it.

We knew that although a dreadful catastrophe had overtaken the men of the *Chelyuskin*, they were neither afraid nor bewildered. They were staunch and full of courage—real Soviet people. No one lost heart. Each man did his duty, made scientific observations, and it was with good reason that the newspaper which they put out while living on the ice was called, *We Won't Give in!* They improvised stoves out of tin barrels, frying pans and lamps out of tins, carved spoons out of bits of board. The windows of their hut were made out of bottles. They had enough ingenuity, gumption and patience to tackle all their problems. And how many tons of ice did they carry on their backs, clearing a space for an airfield on the ice! They would clear the field in the day, and in the night ridges of ice would shoot up again all over the place, destroying every trace of their stubborn hard work. But the brave men of the *Chelyuskin* knew that salvation was sure to come: in the Land of Soviets the Party and Comrade Stalin would not leave anyone in the lurch.

And then in the beginning of March ("In time to celebrate International Women's Day!" Zoya cried out at this news) Lyapidevski's plane made a landing on the ice, and brought the women and children back to safety. "Lyapidevski! What a man!" I heard all round me.

Zoya and Shura pronounced Molokov's name with veneration. And it really did make you catch your breath just to think of what this intrepid airman was doing. In order to hasten the rescue of the marooned explorers he carried men in parachute cradles fastened to the wings. He made several trips in one day. He alone took thirty-nine people off the ice!

"If only I could see him!" Shura dreamed aloud.

The Government commission sent additional aircraft from Kamchatka and Vladivostok to rescue the *Chelyuskin* crew. At this point it became known that the ice round the camp was breaking in several places. New huge cracks appeared and wide patches of water. The ice shifted and formed into ice packs. The

night after the women and children were taken off, the wooden barracks in which they had lived collapsed. Lyapidevski's plane had been only just in time!

Soon came a fresh disaster: a mass of ice swept away the kitchen, and destroyed the airfield, where Slepnev's plane was standing. The situation was one of extreme danger, more menacing with every day and every minute that passed. Spring was coming into its own. Shura greeted the warm days with sheer hatred. "Sunny again! Melting off the roof again!" he would exclaim indignantly.

The number of people on the ice, however, grew less and less, and, at last, on the 13th of April there was no one left. The last six men of the crew had been brought safely back to the mainland.

"Well, is thirteen an unlucky number?" Zoya shouted at Shura triumphantly.

"What joy to know it's all over now!" said Shura with deep feeling.

I am sure that if it were they themselves who had been brought off the ice they could not have been more overjoyed.

Everyone living securely on dry land had feared for the life of those on that ice floe. And now the two months of tense waiting were over!

Previously I had read much about Arctic expeditions. Anatoly Petrovich had been interested in the North, and he had quite a few books about the Arctic—novels and stories. From the books which I had read in childhood I remembered that people lost in the ice were frequently overcome with animosity, mutual distrust, hatred and the animal desire of each to save his own skin, to preserve his own health, even at the cost of the lives and health of his erstwhile friends.

But all this was utterly alien to my children, and in fact to all Soviet children. In their eyes, the way the hundred *Chelyuskin*

men had lived and behaved for two long months on the ice, their courage, their staunchness and comradeship, was the most natural thing in the world.

In the middle of June Moscow greeted the *Chelyuskin* men. The sky was grey and dreary, but I cannot recall a brighter or more brilliant day! Early in the morning the children dragged me to Gorky Street. The whole of Moscow seemed to have gathered here. There was not an inch of space left on the pavements. Aircraft were circling above. Everywhere, on the walls of houses, in small windows and in huge shopwindows, were the portraits of those who had become so dear and familiar to us, the heroes of the *Chelyuskin* and their rescuers. Everywhere there were huge blue and scarlet banners, warm words of welcome, and no end of flowers.

And suddenly cars appeared from the direction of the Byelorussian Railway Station. When you first saw them you could not even guess they were cars: it seemed as if some kind of flying gardens or big flower beds on wheels were approaching! They went past, heading for the Red Square. A pile of flowers, huge bouquets, garlands of roses, and in the middle of it all you could barely make out a man's laughing, excited face, and the wave of his hand. From the pavements and windows, from the balconies and roofs, people threw still more flowers. Leaflets dropped from airplanes fluttered down like big butterflies to cover the asphalt below with a thick rustling layer of paper.

A tall sunburnt man picked Shura up and put him on his strong broad shoulder, and from there my son seemed to shout louder than anyone else.

"What a happy day!" said Zoya breathlessly, and I think those words were on everyone's lips that day.

HIS ELDER SISTER

Zoya would never forget that she was older than Shura and would quite often chide him.

"Shura, do your buttons up! Where's the button? Torn it off

again! It's no use sewing for you. Do you pull them off on purpose? You'll have to learn to sew them on yourself."

Shura was completely under her control, and, though strict, she never tired of looking after him. Sometimes, when angry with him, she would call him Alexander, his full name, which sounded much more impressive than the diminutive Shura.

"Alexander, your knees are through again! Take your stockings off at once!"

Shura would peel off his stockings submissively, and Zoya would darn all the holes.

Brother and sister were inseparable. They would go to bed at the same time, get up at the same time, go to school together, and come home together. Although Shura was almost two years younger than Zoya, they were nearly the same height. Moreover, Shura was far stronger. He had grown into a real young oak, while Zoya had stayed thin and looked frail. If the truth is to be told, Zoya did at times annoy her brother with her remarks, but he rarely rebelled, and even in the stormiest quarrel it never entered his head to push or hit her. Nearly always he obeyed her unquestioningly.

When they went up to the fourth grade, Shura said, "Well, that's that! I shan't sit with you on the same bench any longer. I've had enough of sitting with a girl!"

Zoya did not argue but answered firmly, "You shall sit with me. Or you'll start flying paper airplanes in class again. I know you."

Shura protested vehemently, jealous of his independence. I did not interfere. On the evening of September the 1st I asked, "Well, Shura, what boy are you sitting with now?"

"With a boy called Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya," answered Shura, frowning and grinning at the same time. "Just try arguing with her!"

I was very curious to know what Zoya was like with the other children. I had only seen her with Shura and on Sundays with the toddlers who used to invade our street.

Like Shura, the other youngsters thought much of Zoya and obeyed her every word. On her way back from school they would recognize her rapid walk and her red woollen hat from afar, and rush to meet her with shouts in which the main words were, "Read! Play! Tell!" Handing her schoolbag to Shura, Zoya, her olive-skinned cheeks flushed with the cold and excitement, would fling wide her arms and try to take up as big an armful as she could of the children crowding round her.

Sometimes forming them up in line, she would march along with them singing an old revolutionary song which she had learnt back in Aspen Woods, or other songs which they sang at school. Sometimes she would play at snowballs with the little ones, but with the patronizing restraint of a grownup. Not so Shura, who would forget everything on earth. Like lightning, he would pound snowballs, throw them, dodge approaching balls, and hurl himself into battle again without giving his adversaries a second's respite.

"Shura," Zoya would shout, "they're little! Go away! Don't you realize you mustn't play with them like that?"

Then she would pull the youngsters along on sledges, always seeing to it that each one was properly buttoned and wrapped up so that none of them had a draught in the ear or snow in their felt boots.

In summer, coming back from work, I once saw her by the pond surrounded by a flock of toddlers. She was sitting with her arms round her knees, looking thoughtfully at the water and relating something softly. I went nearer.

".. The Sun is high, far the well does lie, the heat is great and makes you sweat," I heard. "They look and see a goat's hoof full of water. Quoth little Ivanushka, 'Sister Alyonushka, I'll

drink from the hoof! 'Don't drink, little brother, a goat you will become.' . . ."

I walked away quietly, taking care not to disturb the children: they were listening so intently, their faces so full of grieved sympathy for the disobedient, unlucky Ivanushka, and Zoya was repeating Grandma Mavra Mikhailovna's sad tones so truly and feelingly.....

But what was Zoya like with children of her own age?

At one time she used to go to school with Lena, a girl from next door. Then I noticed that they were no longer going together.

"Have you had a quarrel with Lena?"

"No, not a quarrel. But I don't want to be friends with her."

"Why not?"

"She keeps on saying to me, 'Carry my case.' I used to carry it sometimes, and then I said, 'Carry it yourself, I've got my own to carry.' You see, if she were ill or weak, I would carry it, it's not difficult for me. But she's not, so why should I?"

"Zoya's right. That Lena likes to boss everybody around," put in Shura to clinch the matter.

"Well, and why have you stopped being friends with Tanya?"

"She tells a lot of fibs. Everything she says turns out to be untrue. I don't believe a word she says now. And how can you be friends if one doesn't believe the other? And what's more, she isn't fair. We play different games and she always cheats. And when we count out, she always cheats too."

"But you ought to tell her that it is bad to behave like that."

"Zoya's told her plenty of times!" Shura explained.

"And all the children have told her, and even Lydia Nikolayevna, but you can't do anything with her!"

I was worried that Zoya might be too strict towards others and find herself cut off from the class. When I had an hour to spare I called on Lydia Nikolayevna.

"Zoya is a very straight, honest girl," said Lydia Nikolayevna, when she had heard what I had to say. "She always lets the children have the truth straight from the shoulder. At first I was afraid she might rouse her comrades against her. But no, that did not happen. She likes to repeat, 'I'm for fair play.' And the children see that she really does defend what is right....."

"The other day, you know," added Lydia Nikolayevna with a smile, "a boy asked me in front of everybody, 'Lydia Nikolayevna, you say you haven't any favourites, but what about Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya?' I admit I was taken aback a little. Then I asked him, 'Has Zoya helped you to do your exercises?' 'Yes, she has,' he answered. I turned to one of the others: 'And what about you?'—'She's helped me too.' 'And you? And you?' It turned out that Zoya had done something good for nearly every one of them. 'How can you help liking her then?' I asked. And they all agreed with me... Yes, they do like her... And, what's more, they respect her, and that, considering her age, is saying a lot."

"A very determined girl," Lydia Nikolayevna continued after a short silence. "She won't give up what she thinks is right. And the children realize that she is strict with herself, too. She demands as much from herself as she does from others. And of course, it is not easy to be friends with her. Now with Shura it's a different matter," smiled Lydia Nikolayevna. "That boy has plenty of friends. There's one thing though: he can't let the girls pass without teasing them or pulling their pigtails. You should speak to him about it."

SERGEI MIRONOVICH KIROV

Kirov's portrait—framed in mourning. The thought of death is incompatible with it—such a calm, clear, open face. But in the top right-hand corner of the newspaper page there is the announcement stating that Sergei Mironovich Kirov has been assassinated by the enemies of the Party and the people.

Our grief was indeed universal – grief such as Zoya and Shura felt and witnessed for the first time. It moved them deeply, and they remembered it for long afterwards: the endless stream of people flowing slowly and mournfully towards the House of Trade Unions, the words of love and grief over the radio, the pages of the newspapers filled with woe, and the voices and faces of people who in those days could talk and think of one thing only....

"Mama," asked Zoya, "do you remember how they killed the Communists at Sitkino?"

Zoya was right. There was a direct link between the assassination of Kirov and the murder of the seven village Communists. The old hates the new with an implacable hatred. Then too, in Sitkino, the enemy forces had struck from behind. And now again they had struck treacherously with a blow in the back. They had struck at what was most pure and dear to us. They had murdered a man whom the whole people respected and loved, a passionate tribune of the people, a Bolshevik who had fought till his last hour for the happiness of the people.

That night I lay awake for a long time. It was very quiet. And suddenly I heard the padding of bare feet, and a whisper, "Mama, are you asleep? May I get in?"

"Yes, Zoya."

She snuggled in beside me. We were both silent.

"Why aren't you asleep?" I asked at length. "It must be past one."

Zoya pressed my hand tighter. Then she said, "Mama, I want to send in an application to the Young Pioneers."

"That's a good idea."

"But will they accept me?"

"I'm sure they will. You are already eleven years old."

"And what about Shura?"

"Well, Shura will join a bit later."

Again we were silent

"Mama, will you help me to write the application?"

"Better write it yourself. And I will check it afterwards to see if there are any mistakes."

And again she lay very quiet, thinking about something, and I could only hear the sound of her breathing. That night she slept beside me

On the eve of the day when Zoya was to be admitted into the Pioneers, she again tossed about in her bed for a long time.

"Can't sleep again?" I asked

"I'm thinking about tomorrow," responded Zoya in a hushed voice

The next day (I had just come home early and was sitting at the table checking notebooks) she came running from school all in a flutter, and at once answered my silent question:

"I'm a Young Pioneer!"

"GUESS WHO CAME TO SEE US!"

Some time passed, and one day when I came back from work, I found Zoya and Shura in an unusual state of excitement. From one glance at their faces I immediately guessed that something very special had happened.

"Who do you think came to see us? Molokov! Molokov was at our school!" – they both shouted at once before I could say anything. "Molokov, you know, the one who rescued the *Chelyuskin* men! He saved more people than anyone else!"

At last Shura began to tell the story more clearly.

"Well, at first he was on the platform and everything was very solemn... but somehow not quite right.... And then he came down, and we all got round him, and it was wonderful! His talk was so plain and simple! You know what he said? 'A lot of people address their letters to Molokov of the Arctic. But I'm not from the Arctic at all, I live in Irininskoye Village, and I only flew to the Arctic for the *Chelyuskin* men.'

"And after that he said: 'You think there is some special kind of air heroes, different from everybody else. We're all plain folk. Look at me—is there anything special about me?' And it's true, he's just an ordinary man..... And unusual, at the same time!" Shura concluded unexpectedly, adding in awed wonder, "Well, I have seen Molokov!"

So did Shura's fondest dream come true.

A TRIP TO WONDERLAND

For a long time now we have been meeting young men and girls in overalls, rubber boots and wide-brimmed miners' hats, covered with dry clay and earth. They are the builders of the Metro, Moscow's underground railway. They run, very businesslike, from shaft to shaft, or, their shift over, stroll unhurriedly down the middle of the street. And when you look at them you notice not their stained baggy overalls, but their faces. And striking faces they are, glowing, in spite of fatigue, with pride and joy.

People in such overalls attracted universal respect and interest: the first builders of the Metro—no joke that! Probably, not only in Moscow but in Aspen Woods, too, and in faraway Sitkino, people searched the papers to see how the Metro was getting on. And then, in the spring of 1935, came the memorable day when we learnt that the Metro was ready!

"Mama, our Young Pioneer group will be going to see the Metro on Sunday!" Zoya announced, "Will you come with us?"

On Sunday morning I glanced out of the window: rain pouring down in torrents. I was sure that they would postpone the excursion to the Metro, but the children were already out of bed and hurriedly getting ready. It was clear that they would not even think of giving up the excursion.

"But what about the weather?"

"Do you call that rain?" cried Shura recklessly. "It'll be over before we're out of the house."

Many children had already gathered at the tram stop. As far as I could see, the rain even added to their enjoyment. They were laughing and shouting, and they greeted us with cheerful cries.

Then we all got into the tram, and after a crowded and noisy journey, arrived at Okhotny Ryad.

When they stepped onto the marble floor of the vestibule the children at once fell silent. Here, to be sure, there was no time for talk—there was so much to look at!

Sedately, we descend the broad steps and pause in speechless wonder: this is where the real marvels begin! Another second—and Zoya, Shura and I are first to step onto the corrugated ribbon which runs downwards. Silently and smoothly it carries us down, down, down. Past us slide the black rails, slightly springy to the touch. And beyond them, beyond the smooth, shiny barrier, like a staircase suddenly come to life, runs the second escalator. But instead of going down, it clumps upwards, towards us. There are many people going up and they are all smiling. One waves his hand to us, another shouts something, but we hardly notice them, so absorbed are we in our journey.

And then there is firm ground again under our feet. How beautiful it is all round! Up there, above, it is raining cats and dogs, while here...

Once I heard about an old storyteller. All her life she had lived in her native village, and then they brought her to Moscow where she saw trams, cars, airplanes. The people with her were sure that all this would astound her. But no, she took everything in her stride. For years she had dreamed of magic carpets and mile stride boots, and what she saw in Moscow was for her a familiar fairy tale come true.

Something similar happened to the children in the Metro. Delight but nothing akin to surprise was plainly written on their faces, just as if they had at last entered the gates of the fairyland they knew so well.

We go out onto the platform and suddenly from one end, from out the dark tunnel comes a dull increasing roar, two fiery eyes appear.... Another second—and the train, long light-coloured carriages with a red band running along the lower edge of the broad plate glass windows, stops gently at the platform. The doors are opened by an unseen hand, we get in, sit down, and off we go! And at what speed!

Shura glues himself to the window and counts the lights as they flash past. Then he turns round to me.

"Don't be afraid," he says, "there cannot be any crashes in the Metro. That's what they said in the *Pionerskaya Pravda*. They have autostops and traffic lights here called 'electric watchmen.'"

A glance at Shura tells me that it is not only me he is reassuring.

That day we visited every single station. We got out everywhere, went up on all the escalators and then came down again. We looked and looked and could not feast our eyes enough: the neat little square tiles just like cells in a beehive on Dzerzhinsky Station, the huge underground palace of Komsomolskaya Station, its grey, gold and brown marble—it was just too wonderful to be true!

"Look, Mummy, they really have made red gates!" exclaimed Shura, pointing at the niches in the wall of Red Gates Station.

Zoya and I were quite overwhelmed by the light-filled columns of Palace of Soviets Station. At the top they seemed to melt into the ceiling, opening out like gigantic lilies. I had never thought that stone could seem so soft and give off so much light.

We had with us a round faced, dark eyed boy ("Pioneer leader of the first team," explained Zoya, who had noticed me listening to what he was saying). You felt at once that he was one of those lads who are interested in everything on earth, and remember everything they read word for word.

"There is marble here from all over the country," he told us. "This one is from the Crimea, and that from Karelia. And on Kirov Station the escalator is sixty-five metres long. Let's work out how long it takes to come down here!"

Straightaway he and Shura went up and down again.

"Let's count how many people come down in one go," suggested Shura.

They stood still for a minute, frowning with attention, their lips moving soundlessly.

"How many did you make it? One hundred and fifty? And I made it one hundred and eighty. Call it a hundred and seventy. Wow! Ten thousand people an hour! And if it were stationary? Wouldn't there be a crush! And do you know how much the British wanted for building an escalator?" went on the leader of the Pioneer team, all in one breath. "A million gold rubles in our money! But then we set to and did it ourselves, in our own plants. Do you know just what plants were working on it? The Moscow Vladimir Ilyich Works, the Kirov Works in Leningrad, as well as plants in Gorlovka, Kramatorsk....."

We returned home towards evening almost dropping with exhaustion but greatly impressed, and for many days after we kept on talking about the underground wonderland.

It was not long before we got used to the Metro. One kept on hearing, "I'll go by Metro," "We'll meet at the Metro."

But, nevertheless, when I see the ruby gleam of the letter "M" in the evening shadows, I often recall the day when my children and I visited the Metro for the first time.

CAMPFIRES IN THE NIGHT

Zoya and Shura spent most of their summer holidays in a Young Pioneer camp. From there they would write me rapturous letters about how they went gathering berries in the woods, how they bathed in the deep swift river, how they were learning to shoot.

Shura, I remember, even sent me one of his targets. "See how I've learnt to shoot," he wrote proudly. "It does not matter that not all the bullets have hit the bull's-eye. The main thing is that the grouping is good."

And in every letter they begged, "Mama, come and see how we live."

Once I went to see them on a Sunday morning and came back by the last train—the children would not let me go. They took me over the camp, showing me their domain: beds of cucumbers and tomatoes, flower beds, a giant's stride, a volleyball court. Shura was greatly attracted by the big white tent where the older boys lived; the younger ones slept in the house, and this grieved him immensely.

"He has no pride at all!" Zoya told me with strong disapproval. "He is always following Vitya Orlov about."

Vitya Orlov turned out to be the chairman of the Young Pioneer unit's council. He was a strapping energetic boy whom Shura almost worshipped. Vitya was the camp's best basketball player, best marksman, an excellent swimmer, and had numerous other accomplishments to his credit.

Vitya was followed about by no less than twenty small boys. And Vitya always found some important assignment for each of them, "Go to the monitor and tell him he can blow the bugle for dinner," he would say. Or: "Now then, sweep the paths. Look what a mess they've made!" Or: "Water the flower beds. The third team's been stingy with the water. Look how the flowers are wilting in the heat." And the lucky lad would dash off to carry out his instructions.

Shura very much wanted to be with me. It was a long time since we had seen each other, for parents were only allowed to come visiting once a month. But at the same time he did not want to lose Vitya out of sight. He was obviously one of Vitya's most trusted aides.

"You ought to see Vitya shoot!" Shura would say about his hero. "He never misses the bull's-eye. The bullets hit so close they make one hole! It was he who taught me to shoot. And how he can swim! You should see him: breast stroke, and crawl, and over arm and any way you like!"

The children led me down to the river, and I was glad to see that they had both learnt to swim well. Shura showed off in front of me as much as he could; he lay on the water for a long time without moving, then swam along using only one arm, then swam along holding "a grenade." For a ten-year-old it really was not bad.

After that there were races, and Zoya won the one hundred metre sprint. She ran easily and swiftly, and somehow very cheerfully, as if they were not real races, with a strict judge and anxious friends, but just a game.

Shura's greatest moment of triumph came when darkness fell.

"Shura Kosmodemyansky!" Vitya Orlov's voice rang out. "Time to light the campfire!"

Before I had time to look round, Shura, who had just been sitting beside me, vanished into thin air.

In spite of his being one of the camp's youngest, Shura was the camp fireman. Long ago, in Aspen Woods, his father had taught him how to light a campfire, and he had mastered this art to perfection. He would find the very driest twigs and place them so cleverly that they at once caught fire and burned brightly and merrily. But the small bonfire which Shura sometimes built near our house bore no comparison with the one which was to blaze up now on the big camp square!

Shura gave himself up entirely to his work. He forgot about my arrival and about everything else on earth. He dragged up branches and stacked them, preparing a store of kindling to be ready at hand. And when it was quite dark, and the children were sitting all round, at a sign from Vitya Shura struck a match.

At once the dry twigs blazed up, fiery snakes raced swifter than the eye could see through the black, brittle brushwood, and suddenly, hurling back the darkness which embraced us, a sheet of blinding flame leapt skywards.

I should have gone long ago, there were hardly any parents left in the camp. But Zoya held tightly onto my hand, repeating, "Please, stay a little longer! It's wonderful with a campfire! You'll see for yourself. It's not far to the station, and the road is easy. The whole lot of us will come to see you off. Grisha is sure to let us."

And so I stayed. I sat together with the children at the campfire, looking now at the fire, now at the happy young faces reflecting the pink glow of the laughing, skipping flames.

"Well, what shall we talk about today?" said the Young Pioneer leader, whom all the children called simply Grisha.

And I realized that here they did not prepare a special program for the campfire. They just talked heart to heart of the things that interested them most, because there is no better time for talk of this kind than this quiet hour when behind you, listening attentively, hangs the transparent blue of a warm summer night, and you cannot take your eyes off the fire, and you watch how the embers fill with molten gold and then grow dull under the ashes, and how the countless sparks keep on flying up and vanishing.

"I was thinking," Grisha suggested in his quiet frank manner, "that we might ask Nadya's father to tell us today....."

I did not hear what the story was to be about. Grisha's last words were drowned in a chorus of voices. "Yes! Yes! Do tell us! Please, please!" came from all sides. It was clear that the children knew and loved the storyteller.

"He's Nadya Vasilyeva's father," Zoya explained to me all in one breath. "He's wonderful, Mama! He fought in Chapayev's division. And he heard Lenin speak."

"I've told you so much already, you're probably fed up with me," I heard a kindly, low-pitched voice.

"No, no! Tell us some more!"

Nadya's father moved closer to the fire, and I could make out his round shaven head, wide sunburnt face and broad hands, probably very strong and kind, and on his tunic the Order of the Red Banner, faded with age. His reddish clipped moustache failed to hide his good-humoured grin, and his eyes looked out from under his thick bleached eyebrows keenly and cheerfully.

Nadya's father had been one of the first Komsomol members. He had heard Lenin's speech at the Third Komsomol Congress, and when he began to tell us about the great event it grew so quiet all around that you could hear the slightest rustle and the crackle of every twig in the fire.

"...It was not a lecture that Vladimir Ilyich read us. He just talked to us like a friend. He made us think about things that had never entered our heads before. I remember very clearly how he asked: 'What is most important now?' We all thought he would say: Fight! Smash the enemy! After all, it was 1920! We were all either in greatcoats or pea jackets with rifles in our hands. Some of us had just come from battle, others would be in it tomorrow. And suddenly he says: 'Study! The most important thing is to study!'"

Nadya's father spoke with tenderness and surprise, as if reliving again that far-off moment. He told us how grown-up people, twenty years old, sat down at school desks and took up the ABC, to carry out Lenin's order. He told us what a simple and modest man our Ilyich was, how friendly and warmly he talked to the delegates of the congress, how he could answer the most puzzling questions in plain clear words, show a man what was most sacred, inflame him and fill him with strength for the most difficult tasks, open his eyes to what was most beautiful—to the future of mankind, for the sake of which one had to fight and study.

"Vladimir Ilyich said that the generation which was then

fifteen years old would live to become members of the communist society and would build that society themselves.....And it is important that each one of you children should do your bit always, every day--no matter how small and simple as long as it forms part of the great common cause...."

As I looked at my children I thought: How would their lives have turned out before, in those hard dark times when I myself grew up? How difficult it would all have been, how difficult it would have been for me to bring them up. But now it is not only I, their mother, who educates them: the school educates them, and the Pioneer unit, and everything they see and hear all round. And who knows what flame will blaze up in the future from the sparks of this campfire, what feelings, what desires have been sown today in the hearts of the children by this man who had known Chapayev and had heard Lenin.

Unhurriedly, he told us about the things he remembered from the distant and glorious past, and then suddenly said, "And now let's have a song!"

The children stirred, still under the magic spell of the stories they had heard, then began to suggest one after the other:

"The Song of Youth!"

"Chapayev's favourite!"

And so into the darkness flowed the thoughtful melody of a song sung everywhere in those days:

*And roars the storm, and beats the rain,
And lightning flashes in the gloom,
And peals of thunder sound again....*

And then they sang a song of the early Pioneer years:

*Burn campfires through the azure night!
We're Pioneers, children of workers.
Near is the era of wonderful years,
And the call of the Pioneers is "Always be ready!"*

Other songs followed. Zoya pressed close against my shoulder, and would sometimes glance up at me with the air of a conspirator, "You aren't sorry you stayed, are you? See how wonderful it is!"

Not long before it was time for the children to form up for evening roll call, Zoya tugged at Shura's arm, "Time's up! Come on"

Some other boys and girls sitting not far away whispered among themselves, and one by one they quietly began to leave the fire. I also wanted to get up but Zoya whispered, "No, no, you sit here. That's just our team. You'll see what will happen."

A little later all the children marched off for roll call. I walked behind them, and suddenly I heard, "Good sports! What a beauty! Who made it?"

In the middle of the camp square, at the foot of the flagpole gleamed a big five-pointed star. I did not realize at once how it had been done, but then I heard, "They've made it out of glowworms. Do you see--the sparks are green!"

The team leaders gave in their reports. Then they let down the flag, and the bugle rang out long calls of "Sleep, sleep, to your tents!"

Zoya and Shura came up to me, their faces shining.

"That was our team which thought of the star. Lovely, wasn't it? But you know, Mummy, Grisha says we are not to see you off. Nadya's father is going on the train too, you won't be afraid with him."

I said good bye to them, and Nadya's father and I walked to the station. The lights of the station were visible from the camp itself, the road really was straight and short, and of course I was not in the least afraid.

"They're lovable folk!" said my companion. "I like talking to them, they are fine listeners....."

The engine whistle called out to us in the distance, and we quickened our pace.

The flame of the campfire brightened the whole winter for the children. Again and again they would recall the camp, the talks round the fire, the star made of glowworms.

These memories flared up in their composition books. "You can think well by a campfire," wrote Zoya in 1935 in a composition called "How I spent the summer." "By a campfire it is good to listen to stories and then sing songs. After the campfire you realize all the more how fine it is to live in camp, and you want to be even better friends with your comrades."

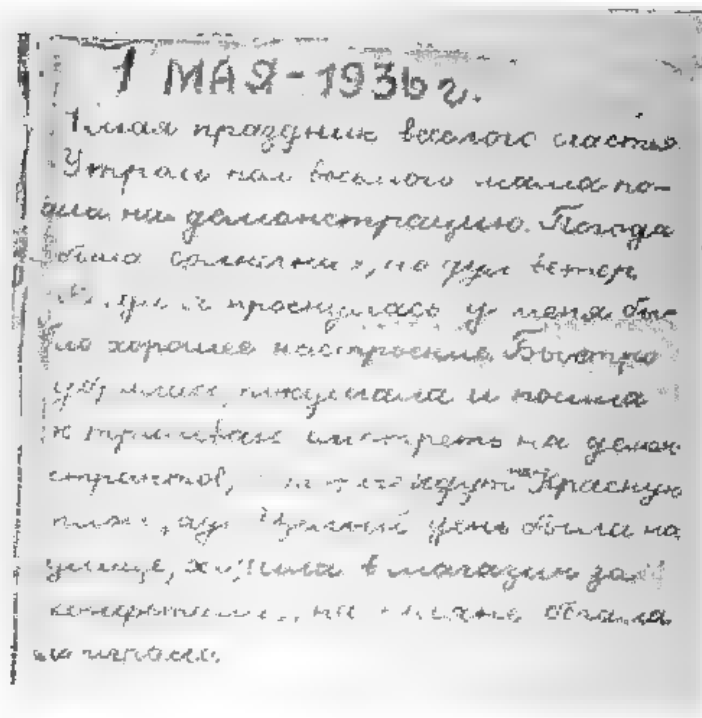
DIARIES

What child has not kept a diary! Nine-year-old Shura was no exception. I could not help laughing when I read it. Shura would usually write something like this, "Got up at eight today. Ate, drank and went out into the street. Had a fight with Petka." Or: "Got up, ate, drank and went for a walk. Did not have a fight with anyone today." The entries differed only in one thing: "Had a fight with Petka," "Had a fight with Vitka," "Did not have a fight with anyone." Otherwise, they were as like as peas in a pod.

Zoya treated her diary very seriously, just as she treated any work she undertook. Her entries were detailed and not too far between. I still have her diary for the spring and summer of 1936.

I have already said that the children used to go away for the summer holidays to a Young Pioneer camp. They used to have a good time there, but I only visited them rarely, and as always we missed each other greatly when we were apart. And therefore we looked forward very much to a summer stay with Grandma and Grandpa at Aspen Woods. They had been inviting us there for quite some time, and we so much wanted to spend the summer together. In 1936 our dream came true; we had begun thinking about our trip to Aspen Woods ever since the spring. And it is from those days that I have a thin notebook—Zoya's diary.

Here are some passages:



The first page, dated May 1, of Zoya's diary for spring and summer 1936, when Zoya was twelve years old

"May 1

"The First of May—a holiday of merry happiness!

"In the morning at half past seven Mama went to the demonstration. The weather was sunny, but there was a wind blowing. I was in a gay mood when I woke up. I cleared away quickly, had something to eat and went to the tram stop to watch the demonstrators, all going to the Red Square. I was in the street all day, went to the shop for sweets, ran and played in the meadow. Then it rained. When Mama came back from the demonstration our children's party began. Presents to each were given out."

"May 3

"Mama did not go to work today and I was very glad. At school I got a 'good' for Dictation. But for Literature and Arithmetic I got 'excellent.' On the whole it was a good day."

"May 12

"At about nine in the morning I went to the shops for milk and bread. Mama bought a bookstand. It made the room bright, beautiful and grand at once. The bookstand is made out of bamboo and it is beautiful. I like it."

"I was in a strange mood. I wanted to go for a walk in the street, run and play. But towards evening they began to share out the kitchen-garden allotments. I got the piece of land under our window. I dug up my allotment. And I dream that Mummy will buy many different seeds—flowers and vegetables—and then my kitchen garden will be lovely!"

"May 24

"The exams start tomorrow. It was a warm, fresh morning. Mama told me what to buy at the shop and went off to work. I got up, put the room in order, but then Mama came in, for she finished early today. And we went first for milk, then for kerosene. We love to go shopping together. Towards midday it got hotter. You could not sit anywhere but in the shade. They brought my copy of *Pionerskaya Pravda*."

"There is no time to read books, but I find time to read my paper. Today they write that a Young Pioneer Palace has been opened in Rostov. It is a very fine one. In the very best building. There are eighty rooms there—and all for us children. It has a toy telephone station. And in another room you pull a switch—and two trams go round in a circle. The trams, of course, are toy ones, but they are just like real ones. And they also say that soon there will be a tiny Metro in the Palace, like the Moscow one, but little. And then those children who have not been to Moscow will still be able to see the Metro."

"And, of course, there was a lot in the *Pionerskaya Pravda*

about the exams. They write: 'Answer calmly, confidently and clearly!' Exams! I do not think of anything else. I am revising my lessons and preparing myself. The main thing is not to be afraid of the teacher and assistants who will be present. And I will definitely pass the exams with 'excellents' and nothing less than 'goods.'"

"June 11

"Today they will tell us who has passed the exams and how we passed them, and they will give out the report cards and prizes!"

"I got up at half past eight and went to the school. All the children were very clean and smartly dressed. And then our study director began his report. It was very quiet in the hall. There were some beautiful books on a table covered with red cloth. They give them to the excellent pupils. And then they called me out. I have got 'excellent' for Russian and Arithmetic, and 'good' for Nature Study and Geography. Shura has also got good marks. They called me up and gave me the very best book—Krylov's fables!"

"June 12

"At 10:30 we set off for the Zuyev Gardens. We waited for the bus and off we went. When we arrived we went to see a wonderful film, *The Motherland Calls*. Then we saw Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov in the gardens. We greeted him and were very glad. There was a play for us, too. Then we went for a walk in the gardens, slid down the hills, went to the library. After that they treated us to cakes and we went home."

"June 26

"In the morning I did not feel like doing anything. I got up somehow and started work. Mama had been working past midnight and was still sleeping. So as not to disturb her, Shura and I went for a walk. It was windy but the sun was lovely and warm. The water in the pond was like fresh milk—warm, clean

"July 7

"I go for walks, run about and help Granny with her work. I like doing what she says. I go and watch the fowls in the wheat field, bathe three times a day, go to the library. I have read a lot of interesting books: *Gulliver in Lilliput*, Gogol's *Inspector General* and Turgenev's *Bezhin Meadow*

"Granny gives us very tasty things to eat: eggs, fried chicken, pancakes. At the market we buy cucumbers, currants and cherries. But sometimes we have trouble. One day (I don't remember which) Shura lost his jacket. We went to look for it but couldn't find it.

"And sometimes I go to the river and come home late. And then Granny is cross with me."

"July 15

"When there is no work to do it is somehow boring and dreary. But here, in the village, it is particularly boring without work. And I have decided to help Granny all I can. When I got

Zoya's annual report card which she received when passing from the fourth to the fifth grade. The table records Zoya's progress, attendance and conduct during the year. For Russian Language, written and oral, and Literature she received consistently excellent marks. Her General History was also marked excellent throughout the year. For Geography Zoya had mostly good marks, and one excellent mark; similarly with Mathematics, Biology and Singing; Drawing and Physical Culture excellent. The attendance section (top right) shows that Zoya missed no school in the first and last quarters of the year. In the second quarter she missed 14 days (56 lessons) through illness, in the third quarter only two days (8 lessons). Zoya was late for school only once during the year. The conduct section (bottom right) is signed by a teacher and countersigned by her mother and records that Zoya's social work and discipline were consistently excellent throughout the year

up, the idea came into my head of washing the floor. I liked washing it. Then I made some ribbons for myself out of red silk. They came out very well, not worse than my blue ones.

"It was a very good day, but in the evening there was loud thunder and fine rain. Bright flashes kept on appearing in the sky—lightning. Thunder frightens the animals: our little goat broke away from the herd, and Granny only just managed to find it in somebody's garden. Today I wrote some letters to Moscow: to Mama and my friend Ira."

"July 23

"Today I looked and saw Nina (that's my cousin) coming with her brother and mama through the wheat which has been planted on the common pasture.

"They live not far off—in the village of Velmozhka (36 kilometres from Aspen Woods). We were very glad they had come."

"July 26

"When Nina arrived I was very glad. We played and talked together, read books and had lots of fun. Granny gave us draughts and lotto, and we had a good game. Today I did not get on with Nina. But afterwards we made it up, and I decided never to quarrel with her again."

"July 30

"We slept in the hall. As soon as Granny came and woke us up, Shura and I remembered that we would have to say good-bye to Nina, Lelik and Auntie Anya. They were leaving for Velmozhka. A cart drew up. The bright sun rose slowly over the awakening earth.

"We said good-bye and they left. I am very sorry they have gone.

"In the afternoon I helped Granny to do some chores: I ironed the washing, went for water and did other things."

"July 31

"Midday. Very hot. There are rumours even that on Sunday

the water in the brook will start boiling.

"The heat is going down, it is nearing evening. I go to fetch the goats. There are five of them: Maika, Chernomorka, Baron, Zorka and one without a name—just Goat.

"Granny milks them. I carry the milk away into the cellar. We go to bed."

"August 1

"My plaits are very short. But since I came here Granny has been doing them very tightly, and they have begun to grow a little. Granny is very kind.

"In the evening a letter from Mummy arrived. She writes that she is ill and may come here. I am very sorry she is ill. She has her holiday from the 15th of August, and then she will come to us."

"August 2

"This time Granny left me to mind the house. She banked up the stove and went out. I made a mess of things. Granny had cooked macaroni and told me to chop eggs into it. I wanted to put the pan of macaroni onto the bench. I put the pan down on the oven prongs. They turned over and my macaroni went flying! I wiped the floor quickly and cooked some fresh macaroni.

"Towards evening Granny and I went to bathe. There were rumours that it would be hot today and that the water in the brook would boil. But that was not true, it was a very hot day but the water in the brook did not boil."

"August 5

"Today I helped Granny: I washed the floor, the windows and benches. I ironed the washing. I am anxious to know about the state of Mummy's health."

"August 11

"There is very little rain here. I hope the harvest does not get

burned. In Granny's kitchen garden there are cucumbers, pumpkins, melons, cabbages, tobacco, tomatoes and hemp. On the common pasture there are potatoes, pumpkins again and tomatoes. We have no sunflowers of our own. Granny did not know that we should be coming and did not plant any. It is very hot. The strong hot wind stirs up the dust and stings your eyes."

"August 13

"We were just going to have tea when a letter arrived from Mummy. She writes that she will be coming on Saturday, that is tomorrow evening. When we read the letter we were very, very glad. She will come here and will at last have a little rest. Grandad has gone to Tambov."

"August 15

"Early in the morning there was a quiet knock on the door. Shura and Granny and I jumped out of bed. Mummy had come! How overjoyed we were! Granny began to fry pancakes, and Mama had brought presents for us. Auntie Olya could not come herself but had sent us a lot of tasty things."

"August 17

"Mama, Shura and I went to the kitchen garden and picked a pumpkin and seven melons no bigger than your fist. Granny made Porridge out of the pumpkin and dried the seeds.

"Towards evening Shura, Mummy and I went to bathe. How good it is here! But with Mummy it's three times as good!"

August 19

"It has been raining. Granny has given me a lot of different scraps to make a blanket for myself."

"August 22

"It was a dull morning. Shura and I have been rather naughty. But we have decided we won't annoy Mummy any more."

"August 24

"When I got up this morning Granny gave me a very old painted box, and Grandad gave me his picture. I was very pleased with these presents. I'll keep them as souvenirs. We are thinking about Moscow."

"LITTLE WHITE STICK"

Yes, that was a wonderful summer, so bright and free of care. Zoya and Shura were quite big now, but just as five years ago, when I came for them from Moscow, they kept close to my heels, as if they were afraid that I might suddenly disappear or run away from them.

For me the time I spent with them has blended into a single long happy day in which nothing is distinguishable separately. And only one event I remember as clearly as if it had happened yesterday.

Either Slava had taught the children this game or they had read about it in the *Pionerskaya Pravda*, but, whatever its source, it became their favourite. It was called "Little White Stick." You had to play it in the evening when it had grown dark enough for dark objects to blend with the ground so that the eye could distinguish only something light or shining. My children and our neighbours' children would split up into two teams and choose a judge. The judge—he was the thrower as well—would hurl the little white stick as far as possible, and all the players would rush to find it. He who found the stick ran at once to give it to the judge. But you had to do it cunningly and secretly so that your opponents would not notice it. The player would hand on his find to a comrade in his team, who would pass it on to someone else so as to prevent the rival team from guessing who had the stick. If they succeeded in giving the stick to the judge unnoticed, the team received two points. If the opponents noticed the finder of the stick and caught him, then

both teams received one point each. The game went on until the score reached ten points.

Zoya and Shura were terribly keen on this game, and nearly burst my eardrums telling me how very interesting it was. And Slava would add, "It's useful too. Teaches you to be friends. Not each man for himself, but one for all and all for one."

Shura was often the judge: he had a strong arm and could throw the stick very far, so that it was not easy to find. One day Zoya volunteered to throw the stick.

"That's not a girl's job!" said one of the boys.

"Not a girl's job? Let me try!"

Zoya picked up the stick, swung and threw it. and the stick landed almost at her feet. Zoya blushed, bit her lip and ran home.

"Why did you go away?" Slava asked her when he came back after the game.

Zoya was silent.

"Offended, huh? You shouldn't be. If you can't throw, let someone else be the judge who can. You can play with the rest. There's nothing to be offended at. That kind of pride's a good thing when there's not too much of it."

Again Zoya did not answer, but the following evening she joined the players as if nothing had happened. The children liked her, and no one reminded her of what had happened yesterday.

I had already forgotten about this event when one day Slava came into the house and dragged me out after him. We went round the house and past the front garden.

"Look, Auntie Lyuba," Slava whispered.

Some distance away, with her back to us, stood Zoya. I did not at once realize what she was doing. She was swinging and throwing something, then running to fetch it. She picked it up, came back to her former position and threw it again. I looked

closer: it was a small wooden stick. We stood behind a tree out of Zoya's sight, stood silently, watching her tirelessly throwing the stick, running to pick it up and throwing it again. At first she made the throw only with her arm. Then she began to swing back and thrust forward with her whole body, as if flying after the stick. And she went on throwing it further and further.

Slava and I tiptoed away, and Zoya soon came home. She was very red and beads of perspiration stood out on her forehead. Zoya washed and took up her sewing: she was making a blanket out of odd scraps of cloth. Slava and I exchanged glances, and he giggled. Zoya raised her eyes.

"What's the matter?"

But Slava did not explain.

The next two days I left the house quietly at the same hour and watched Zoya throwing either a stone or a stick. And about ten days later, not long before we were due to leave, I heard Zoya suggesting to the children who had gathered round our porch, "Let's play at Little White Stick! I'll be the judge!"

"Trying it again?" said Shura in surprise.

But without more ado Zoya swung her arm and threw, and everyone around gasped: the stick flashed in the air and landed a very long way off.

"There's a little vixen for you!" said Grandad at supper. "Was the stick worth the trouble? There wasn't any good in it, you just wanted to hold your own in an argument, didn't you?"

Zoya was about to answer but Grandma forestalled her, "There's a saying, 'Come what may I'll have my way' and she added with a smile, "And that's after my own heart."

Zoya buried her face in her plate and was silent. Suddenly she smiled and answered, also with a saying (she was not Mavra Mikhailovna's granddaughter for nothing!), "The bank may be steep but the fish is a treat!"

And everyone at the table laughed.

THE GADFLY

Spring. There is a warm wind blowing, full of the scent of freshness and damp earth. It is good to have a breath of spring! I get out of the stuffy tram before my stop. It's not far to our house, I'll do the rest on foot.

I see that I am not the only one who is glad spring is here. The passers-by smile more often, their eyes are brighter, their voices sound louder and more lively.

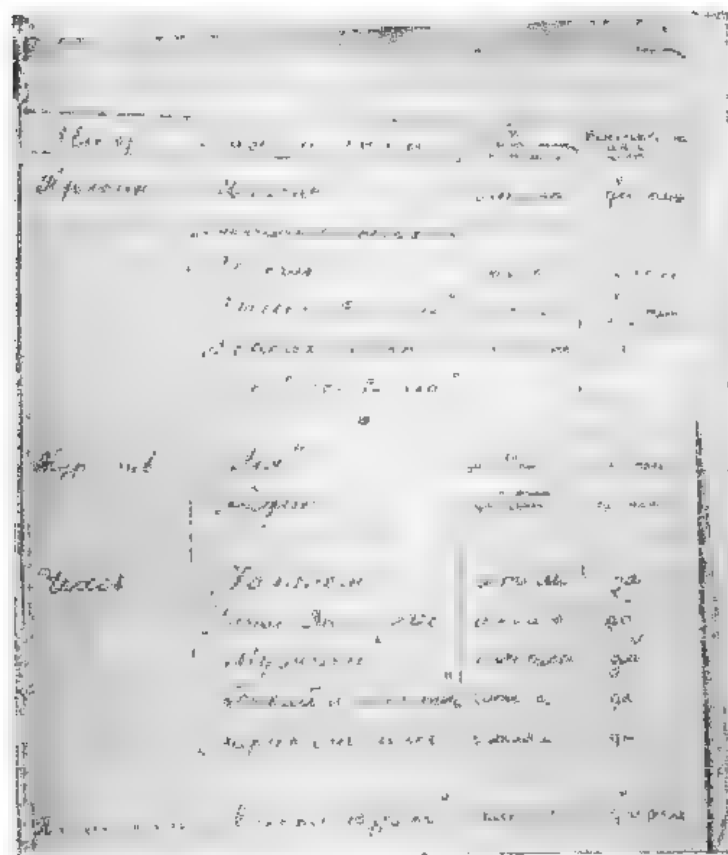
"...The Republican advance at Cordova developed successfully," I catch a passing phrase. "And in the province of Estremadura....."

Yes, Spain is in everyone's heart and on everyone's lips these days. The winged words of Dolores Ibarruri, "It is better to die standing, than to live on your knees!" have flown round the world and have roused the heart of every honest minded man.

In the morning, scarcely before she is awake, Zoya runs to the letter box for the newspaper, to see what is happening today on the front in Spain.

And Shura ... he's not thirteen yet—that's what is worrying him, that's what stops him from making a beeline for Madrid. Every evening, having read in the paper about a girl fighting bravely in the Republican ranks or having heard something on the radio about a young Spaniard who went to the front against the will of his family, Shura brings up the same subject:

"And he turned out to be such a fine fighter! Once a fascist shell smashed their dugout and wrecked the anti-tank gun. But this boy—Emeterio Cornejo, they call him—he grabs a grenade and jumps out of the trench! Then he runs towards the tank and throws the grenade right at it ...! It blew up under the caterpillar, and the tank went spinning round on one spot...! Then the others brought up a box of grenades. Cornejo began throwing them one after another. Another tank keeled over, then a third, and the rest turned round and went back. So there you are! And you would have thought there's nothing more terrible than a tank."



While studying in the sixth grade (she was then thirteen) Zoya kept a notebook with a list of the books she read. The page reproduced here shows that Zoya had read Puskin's "Gypsies," "The Fountain of Bakhchisarai," "Poltava," "Belkin's Tales," "The Robber Brothers" and "The Blackamoor of Peter the Great"; Turgenev's "Asya" and "Rudin"; Chekhov's "The Chameleon," "Warrant Officer Prishcheyev," "Peasants," "Thin and Fat" and "The Death of an Official"; Pomyalovsky's *Notes on a Religious School*. The last column headed "Whether I liked it or not" records a "yes" for nearly every book and a "yes, very much" for "Gypsies," "Poltava," "Belkin's Tales," "Asya," "Rudin" and *Notes on a Religious School*.

"And how old is this Cornejo?"

"Seventeen," answers Shura.

"And how old are you?"

It is cruel of me to ask such a question.

Shura heaves a great sigh....

"Mama!" a ringing voice at my side rouses me from my thoughts. "Why so late? We've grown tired of waiting!"

"Is it so late? I promised to be home at seven....."

"And now it's ten to eight. I was beginning to get worried"

Zoya takes my arm and lengthens her stride to fall in step with me. She has grown a lot in the last two years. Very soon she will be as tall as I am. Sometimes I find it strange that I have such a grown-up daughter. Her skirt is already too short, and her embroidered blouse is getting tight, it is time to think of a new one.

Since I brought the children to Moscow in 1931 we have scarcely been apart. Whenever any one of us left the house, be it for only a short time, he would say where he was going and when he would be back. If I promised to be home from work not later than eight o'clock, I would do my best to keep my word. If someone delayed me, Zoya would begin to get worried, come out to meet me at the tram stop and wait—just as she had today.

If Shura did not find his sister at home when he arrived, his first question was, "Where's Zoya? where's she gone? why is she taking so long?"

"Where's Shura?" Zoya would ask almost before she was inside the room.

And I, if I happened to Come home before the children, would feel strange and uneasy until I caught the familiar sound of their footsteps on the stairs. And in spring I would stand at the open window and wait... I have only to close my eyes now to see them: there they are, together as always, talking hard about something and my heart at once grows warm ...

Zoya gently takes my paper case and handbag.

"You must be tired. Let me carry them."

We walk slowly, rejoicing in the glorious spring evening, and tell each other about everything that has happened during the day.

"The paper says the Spanish refugee children have been taken to the Artek Young Pioneer Camp," says Zoya. "The fascists nearly sank their ship before they got there. How I should love to see those children.....! Just think, after all that bombing and everything, to find yourself suddenly in the Crimea! Is it nice and warm there now?"

"Yes, it's quite warm in the South in April. The roses are blooming. Yes, just look at yourself: even in Moscow you have managed to catch the sun, your nose is peeling."

"You see, we've begun planting the garden round the school. I spent half a day in the air and got sunburnt. Everybody has to plant a tree. I'm planting a poplar, I like to see poplar snow falling. And a poplar's got such a lovely smell, hasn't it? Ever so fresh and a little bitter....Well, we're home! Have a wash quick, and I'll warm up the dinner."

I go to wash, and without looking I know what Zoya is doing. Walking noiselessly about the room in her slippers she is lighting the stove to warm the soup, laying the table quickly and skilfully. The room is spotlessly clean, the floor has recently been washed and gives off a fresh smell. On the window in a tall glass there are two sprigs of pussy willow like twigs with sleeping fluffy silver bumblebees.

The cleanliness and comfort in our house are Zoya's doing. All the housework, cleaning up and shopping, rests on her. In winter she keeps the stove burning, too. Shura also has his duties: he carries the water, chops wood and goes to the shop for kerosene. But he does not concern himself with "trifles"; like many boys he is convinced that it does not befit his sex to sweep the floors and run to the shops: "Any girl can do that!"

And here he is.

The door flies open with a crash, and Shura stands on the doorstep: red of cheek, arms up to the elbows in mud, and, alas, a black eye again.

"We've been playing!" he explains cheerfully. "Good evening, Ma! Have you had a wash yet? Here's a chair for you. Now I'll wash."

He spends a long time splashing and snorting, telling us at the same time about the football game with such delight that one would think nothing else in the world mattered.

"And when will you do your German translation?" asks Zoya.

"Can't a man eat first?"

I start my late dinner; the children have their supper. Now all the talk is about what the school garden will be like. I listen and realize that the children are ready and willing to plant round their school every kind of tree they have ever heard of.

"Why do you say a palm won't grow? In the magazine *Ogonyok* I saw a photo of some palms with snow all round them. That means they stand the cold wonderfully".

"Fancy comparing the Crimean winter with ours." Zoya retorts calmly. Then she turns to me, "Mama, did you bring me something to read?"

Silently I take *The Gadfly* out of my case. Zoya flushes with pleasure.

"Oh, thank you!" she says, and unable to resist the temptation begins to turn over the pages of the book reverently. But only for a moment. She lays the book aside and quickly clears the table, washes the crockery, and sits down to her lessons.

After a little grumbling and sighing ("Won't tomorrow morning do?") Shura sits down beside her.

Zoya begins with what she finds most difficult: mathematics. Shura opens his German textbook, putting aside his problems: he finds them easy.

After half an hour Shura closes his textbook with a snap and pushes back his chair noisily.

"Finished! And the problems can wait till tomorrow morning."

Engrossed in her work, Zoya does not even turn her head. Beside her lies *The Gadfly*, a book she has been asking me to bring her for a long time, but I know that until Zoya has finished her lessons she will not start reading.

"Let's have a look at your translation, Shura," I say. "Hm.... Is that supposed to be the dative case?"

"Yes . . . that's a howler."

"There you are.... And here you need not 'u' but 'ü.' And look at this: *Garten* is a noun, isn't it? Why have you put a small letter? Three mistakes. Sit down, please, and copy it out again."

Shura looks out of the window with a sigh; his chums are sitting on the steps waiting for him to come out. It is not so very late, they could have one more game... But facts are facts: three mistakes ... you cannot argue about that! And with a sigh of resignation Shura sits down at the table once again.

At night I wake up with a feeling that something in the room is not quite as it should be. And I am right. The table lamp is alight and covered with a newspaper: Zoya with her cheeks in her hands is bending over *The Gadfly*. Her face, hands and the pages of the book are wet with tears.

Feeling my glance she raises her eyes and smiles silently at me through her tears. We do not say anything to each other, but we are both thinking of the day when Zoya said to me reproachfully, "Fancy you, a grownup, crying."

THE GIRL IN PINK

The bare black branches of a tree and a starling box against a bright spring sky. There is nothing else in the picture but I look at it for a long time, and somewhere inside me rises a warm

wave of joy and hope. This is not just a drawing of a tree, the sky and a starling box—it has that without which painting is impossible, mood, thought, the ability to see and understand Nature.

And here is another picture: horses galloping, swords raised threateningly in the hands of fierce cavalymen. There is real movement here.....And another landscape: the familiar overgrown pool in Timiryazev Park. And here is Aspen Woods—the high lush grass and the silvery ripple of our merry little brook.....

I am alone in the house, and on my knees lies a bulky folder of Shura's drawings.

Shura draws better and better with each year. We often go to the Tretyakov Picture Gallery. I not only want him to learn to draw, I want him to know and understand painting.

I remember well our first visit to the Tretyakov Gallery. We went slowly from room to room. I told the children about the historical subjects and myths which had inspired the artists. The children kept asking endless questions. Everything delighted and surprised them. Zoya was astounded that Vrubel's fortuneteller kept looking at her from all angles. The huge black eyes, joyless and all knowing, followed us about unwaveringly.

Then we came into the Serov room. Shura went up to "The Girl with the Peaches"—and froze to the spot. The dark haired girl with softly glowing cheeks looked at us thoughtfully. Her hands lay so peacefully on the white tablecloth. Through the window behind her one could visualize a large shady garden with century-old lime trees, overgrown paths leading away into the back of beyond..... We stood for a long time looking in silence at the picture. At last I touched Shura lightly on the shoulder.

"Come," I said quietly.

"Just a bit longer," he begged in the same hushed voice.

It was like that sometimes with him: a strong, deep sensation would almost petrify him. It had been like that once in Siberia when four-year-old Shura had entered a real forest for the first time. And it was like that now. I stood beside my son looking at the peaceful, thoughtful girl in pink and tried to guess what had struck him so much. His drawings were always full of movement and noise—if one can say that a brush or pencil can communicate noise: galloping horses, rushing trains, and zooming airplanes. And Shura himself was a young scamp who loved to run, shout and play football. What had charmed him in Serov's girl, in this picture which breathed such undisturbed and tranquil stillness? Why had he suddenly become so subdued, so unlike his usual self?

That day we did not look at anything else. We went home, and all the way Shura kept asking: When did Serov live? did he begin to draw early? who taught him? Repin, the one who painted "Zaporozhye Cossacks Writing Their Reply to the Turkish Sultan"?

That was a long time ago. Shura was barely ten years old then. Since then we often visited the Tretyakov Gallery, saw other pictures by Serov, and Surikov's paintings—gloomy Menshikov in exile in Beryozovo Village, the inspired Suvorov, Boyarina Morozova, the sad, moving landscapes of Levitan, and everything the gallery contained. But it was after his first meeting with Serov's work that a landscape appeared for the first time in Shura's drawings, and it was then that he made his first attempt to draw Zoya.

"Sit down, please," he asked his sister with unusual gentleness. "I'll try to draw you."

Zoya would sit for a long time, patiently, with hardly a movement. And even in those first unskilled portraits there was a likeness—a barely perceptible one, but it was undoubtedly Zoya's eyes which looked out from the paper: steady, serious, thoughtful eyes.....

And now I am looking through Shura's drawings. What will he become, what kind of a man will he grow up?

Shura unquestionably has a turn for mathematics. He has inherited from his father a love of technique, and he has hands of gold; he can do everything with them—anything he puts his hands to turns out well. I am not surprised that he wants to be an engineer. He spends all his pocket money on the magazine *Science and Technique*, and he not only reads every number from cover to cover, but is always constructing something on the advice given in the magazine.

Shura always puts his heart into his work. I happen once to call in at the children's school to take a look at the garden. The work was in full swing; they were digging, planting bushes and young trees. The air was ringing with the sound of voices. Zoya, flushed and dishevelled, put down her shovel for a second and waved to me. Shura with another lad a little older than himself went by carrying a stretcher. It was hard to imagine how the stretcher could hold such a heap of earth!

"Careful there, Kosmodemyansky, you'll strain yourself!" a tall, fair-haired, athletic-looking girl shouted after him.

And I heard Shura pause and answer cheerfully, "Don't You believe it! It can't happen if you put your heart into your work. That's what my grandad told me. Work only breaks you if you are afraid of it, but if you don't spare your strength you get all the stronger!"

The same day at supper he said, half in jest and half in earnest, "Mum, perhaps I could go to the Timiryazev Academy when I leave school. I'm good at digging gardens. What do you think?"

Apart from this, Shura wants to be a sportsman. In winter Zoya and he skate and ski, in summer they bathe in Timiryazev pool. Shura is a real athlete; at thirteen years old he looks a good fifteen. In winter he rubs himself down with snow, starts bathing in spring sooner than anybody else and finishes late in

autumn when even the most intrepid bathers shiver at the mere sight of water. And for a game of football Shura is ready to forget both food and lessons.

And yet.....in spite of all this it seems Shura's fondest dream is to become an artist. Recently he has been devoting every spare minute to drawing. From the library he brings, and asks me to bring, the biographies of Repin, Serov, Surikov, Levitan

"Listen to this," he says in an awed voice. "From the age of nine Repin used to draw every day, not missing a single day of his life! Just think! And when he hurt his left arm and couldn't hold the pallet, he tied it onto himself and went on working just the same. What grit!"

I look through Shura's drawings, and recognize now our favourite bench in the park, now the hawthorn bush growing near our house—Shura loves to lie under it in the hot summer evenings. Here is our porch where he sits till late at night with his comrades after a game, or here is a meadow—their football field.

Nowadays Shura is always drawing Spain: skies of an incredible blue, silvery olive groves, reddish mountains, the sun-scorched earth furrowed with trenches, pitted with shell holes, stained with the hot blood of the Republican fighters.... It seems to me that when the Surikov exhibition opened in the Tretyakov Gallery last winter Shura went there a few extra times just for the sake of the Spanish water colours; it was as if Surikov had become even dearer to him because he had travelled in Spain, seen and painted that far-off land.

But what is this...? The façade of a high building with many windows looks familiar to me. Yes, it is School No. 201! And round it is the future garden: birch trees, maples, oaks and ... palms.

THE BET

Zoya and Shura were becoming quite grown-up now. And yet there were times when they seemed quite little to me.

I fell asleep quickly one evening and woke up soon afterwards with a start. I could hear what sounded like handfuls of pebbles being thrown at the windowpane. It was the rain slashing down on the window and beating at the glass. I sat up in bed, and saw Shura sitting up too.

"Where's Zoya?" we asked in one voice.

Zoya's bed was empty. But all at once, as if in answer to our question, muffled voices and laughter came from the staircase, and the door of our room opened quietly. On the doorstep stood Zoya and Ira, a girl of Zoya's age who lived in the small house next door.

"Where have you been? Where have you come from?"

Zoya took off her coat in silence, hung it up and began to pull off her rain soaked shoes.

"Yes, where have you been?" exploded Shura.

And then Ira, who was so excited that even when she laughed tears flowed down her cheeks, began to relate what had happened.

At about ten o'clock in the evening Zoya had knocked on Ira's window. And when Ira came out Zoya told her about an argument she had had with the girls. They had said that Zoya would be afraid to walk through Timiryazev Park on such a dark evening, but Zoya kept saying, "I am not afraid." And they had made a bet: the girls would go by tram to the stop called Timiryazev Academy, but Zoya was to go there on foot. "I will make marks on the trees," said Zoya. "We'll believe you without that," the girls assured her. But at the last moment they themselves got frightened and began to persuade Zoya to cancel the bet. It was very cold and dark outside, and it had already begun to rain.

"But she only got all the bolder," Ira related laughing and crying. "And off she went. And we went by tram. Then we wait and wait and she does not come. And then we look and there she is.....laughing away....."

I looked at Zoya in surprise. She was hanging out her wet stockings to dry over the stove.

"Well, you know, I did not expect that from you," I said. "Such a big girl and so....."

"Silly?" ended Zoya smiling.

"Yes, I hope you don't mind my saying so, but it was not a smart thing to do."

"It'd be natural if it had been me," burst out Shura.

"And she wanted to walk back, too," complained Ira. "We had to persuade her like anything to make her come back on the tram with us."

"Take your things off, Ira!" I cried, noticing how wet she was. "Warm yourself?"

"No, I have to go home. My mama will be angry too..." Ira confessed.

Left alone we were silent for some time. Zoya was smiling cheerfully but did not start the conversation. She sat quietly drying and warming herself by the stove.

"All right, you won the bet," said Shura at last. "What was the stake?"

"Oh, I hadn't thought of that," responded Zoya with genuine regret. "We just had a bet but did not say for what....."

"Well, you are a one!" exclaimed Shura. "You might have thought of me: if I win, give Shura a new football, or something like that. Couldn't even think of your own brother!" He shook his head in mock reproach. Then he added seriously, "But all the same, I did not expect a thing like that from you. What gave you the idea of proving your spunk in that way? Even I understand that's not right!"

"And do you think I don't?" retorted Zoya. "But I so much wanted to give the girls a scare. I went through the wood, but it was they who were afraid!"

She laughed, and Shura and I could not help joining in.

TANYA SOLOMAKHA

I began to discuss money matters with the children very early.

In 1937, I remember, we opened a savings account and solemnly deposited our first seventy five rubles. Every time we were able to save a little money near the end of the month, Zoya would take it to the savings bank, even when the amount was only some fifteen or twenty rubles.

Now another expense item had appeared on our list: Bank Account No. 159782, to which citizens of the U.S.S.R. sent money collected for the women and children of Republican Spain.

Shura thought of it first. "Zoya and I can spend less on lunch."

"No," I said, "we won't touch the lunches. Now if you were to miss one or two football games—that would be all to the good....."

We kept a list of the most necessary things: Zoya has no mittens, Shura's shoes are falling to pieces, my galoshes have a hole in them. Apart from this, Shura's paints have run out, and Zoya needs some threads for embroidery. The list often gave rise to argument; the children always insisted on buying first what I needed.

Books were our favourite expense item.

What a pleasure it is to walk into a bookshop, to rummage about among the books lying on the counter, to step back, and standing on your toes with your head on one side, to read the titles on the backs of the books ranged closely along the top shelves; then, unhurriedly, to look through them and discuss



Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya in 1937

their merits ... and, finally, to come back home with a heavy neatly wrapped package! The day when a new book graced our bookcase (it used to stand in the corner, at the head of Zoya's bed) was a great treat for us. Again and again we would mention our new purchase. We would read the new book in turns, and sometimes aloud on Sunday evenings.

One book which we read like that was a collection of true stories called *Women in the Civil War*. I remember I sat darning stockings, Shura was painting, and Zoya opened the book to read. Unexpectedly Shura said, "I say, don't read them in order. Just open it at random, and we'll begin with the first one that turns up."

I really do not know what put this idea in Shura's head, but we decided to adopt his plan. The first story we read was "Tanya Solomakha." It was about a village schoolteacher and contained the notes of three people: those of her brother, Grisha Polovinko, one of her pupils, and her younger sister.

Her brother told about Tanya's childhood, how she grew up, studied, how she loved reading. There was one place there which made Zoya stop and glance at me. The lines were about how Tanya read *The Gadfly* aloud; late at night Tanya finished reading the book and said to her brother, "And do you think I don't know what I am living for? I feel I could give up my blood, drop after drop, so that people might live better."

After graduating from high school Tanya began to teach in a Kuban village. On the eve of the revolution she joined an underground Bolshevik organization, and during the Civil War—a Red Guard detachment.

In November 1918 the Whites broke into Kozminskoye village, where Tanya lay ill with typhus. They put the sick girl in prison and tortured her in the hope that she would betray her comrades.

Grisha Polovinko wrote how he and his classmates had gone to the prison. They wanted to see their teacher and help her.

They saw how Tanya, bruised and bloody, was brought out into the yard and placed against a wall. The boy was amazed to see how calm her face was, which expressed neither fear, nor prayer for mercy, nor even pain from the torture she had just endured. Wide-eyed she gazed at the gathered crowd.

Suddenly she raised her hand and said in a loud clear voice, "You can beat me as much as you like, you can murder me, but the Soviets are not dead the Soviets are alive. They will come back!"

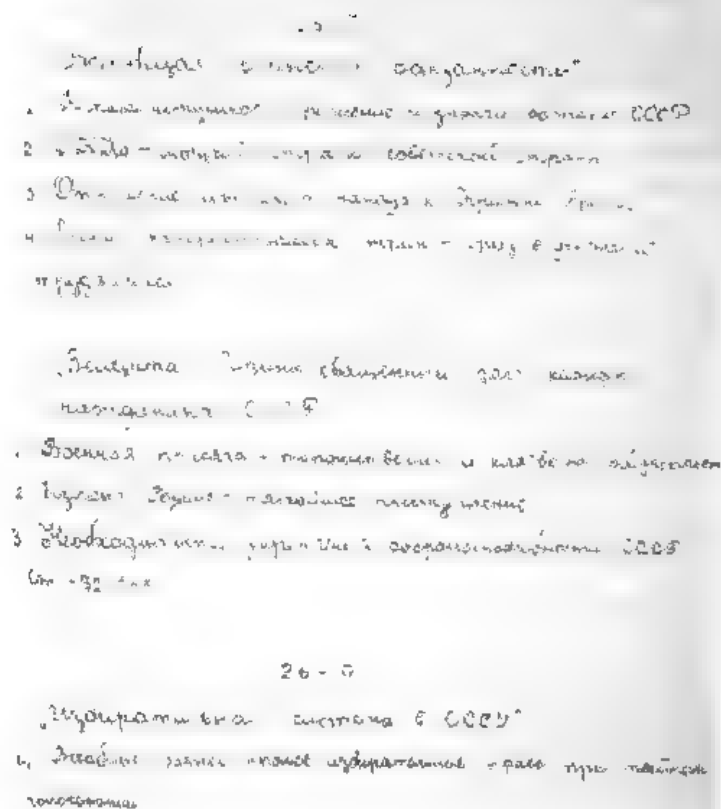
A Cossack sergeant lashed out at Tanya with a ramrod and slit open her shoulder. The drunken Cossacks threw themselves upon her, kicking her and beating her with the butts of their rifles. "I'll make you beg for mercy!" the sergeant-executioner shouted at her, and, wiping the blood which streamed down her face, Tanya answered, "You never will! I won't beg anything from you!"

And Zoya read on how again and again, day after day, Tanya was tortured. The Whites revenged themselves on her for not crying out, for not begging for mercy, for looking bravely in the faces of her tormentors .. .

Zoya put the book down, stood up and crossed towards the window, and stood there for a long time without turning round. She rarely cried, and did not like others to see her tears.

Shura who had abandoned his album and paints as soon as the reading began, picked up the book and began to read on further. Raya Solomakha, Tanya's sister, wrote: "This is what I learnt about her death. At dawn on November 7 the Cossacks rushed into the prison. They began to club the prisoners with their rifle butts and drive them out of the cell. At the door Tanya turned round to those who were left.

"Good-bye, Comrades!" her calm voice rang out. 'May the blood on these walls not have been shed in vain! The Soviets are coming!'



A page out of Zoya's notebook on the Soviet constitution. Under the heading: "Universal Military Service" Zoya groups the following points. 1) capitalist encirclement and the tasks of defending the U.S.S.R.; 2) the Red Army as a powerful guardian of the Soviet Land; 3) the attitude of the Soviet people to the Red Army; 4) the armies of the capitalist countries as instruments for the oppression of the working people. Under the heading "To defend the country is the sacred duty of every citizen of the U.S.S.R., come: 1) the oath of allegiance as a solemn and inviolable duty 2) treason to the Motherland as the most heinous of crimes; 3) the necessity for strengthening the defences of the U.S.S.R. Under the heading: "The Electoral System of the U.S.S.R." the first point is: universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

"In the early frosty morning, outside the common pasture, the Whites sabred eighteen heroes. Tanya was the last to fall. True to her word, she did not beg for mercy from her executioners."

I remember that it was not only Zoya who was moved to tears by the amazing strength and purity of Tanya's character.

THEIR FIRST EARNINGS

One evening my brother came to see us. After drinking tea and chatting with the children, who were always glad to see him, he suddenly fell silent, tugged at his capacious, tightly packed case, and looked meaningfully at us. We at once realized that he had something in store for us.

"What have you got there, Uncle Sergei?" asked Zoya.

He did not answer at once. Winking at her with the air of a conspirator, he opened his case unhurriedly, took out some drawings and began to go through them. We waited patiently.

"These draughts," said Sergei at last, "have to be copied. What mark did you get for drawing, Shura?"

"He gets 'excellent,' " answered Zoya.

"Well then, Shura my boy, I've got a job for you. It's a good man's job, and you'll be helping the family. Here is my instrument case. It dates back to my Institute days, but the instruments work well, everything's in order. You have India ink, haven't you?"

"Yes, and tracing paper, too," put in Zoya.

"Well, that's fine! Move a bit closer, and I'll show you what's what. The work's not complicated, but it needs great precision and accuracy, and will keep you on your toes."

Zoya sat down beside her uncle. Shura who had been standing with his back to the stove did not stir from the spot and did not say a word. Sergei shot a glance at him, then bent over the drawings and began to explain the task.

Both my brother and I understood what was the matter.

One trait in Shura's character had always worried me greatly: his obstinacy. For example, Shura loves music, he has a good ear, and has been playing on his father's guitar for a long time now. Sometimes it happens, of course, that he doesn't catch a tune at once. If I tell him, "You're wrong there, this is how it goes," Shura hears me out, then answers, cool as can be, "But I like it better this way," and goes on playing in his own fashion. He knows perfectly well that I am right, and next time he will strike the right note, but not this time. He lives by a firm rule: all decisions, big and small, he adopts independently—nobody can tell him what to do, he is a grown-up man, he knows everything and understands himself!

Apparently, his uncle's suggestion had seemed to him an attempt on his dearly-loved independence, on his right to manage himself. And while Sergei explained what should be done and how, Shura listened attentively and silently from a distance. As for Sergei—he gave Shura no further attention.

When he was already at the door, my brother remarked to no one in particular, "I'll need the drawings in exactly a week."

Zoya took up her physics book. I, as usual, began correcting the copybooks of my pupils. Shura opened a book. For some time after my brother's departure the room was quiet. But then Zoya got up, stretched herself and shook her head (she had a habit of tossing back a dark lock of hair which was always falling over her right eyebrow). I saw that she had finished her homework.

"Well, it's time we started. We can finish half of it tonight, can't we, Mummy?" Zoya said, and began to spread out the drawings on the table.

Shura dropped his book, glanced at his sister and said moodily, "Sit down and read your *My Universities*..... (in those days Zoya was reading Gorky's autobiographical trilogy) I can draw better. I'll manage without you."

But Zoya did not listen to him. Together they occupied the whole table with their drawings, and I had to move to the very edge with my notebooks. Soon the children were deep in their work. And as often happened when sewing or washing or clearing away—when doing any job demanding not the whole of a man but only a true hand and eye—Zoya struck up quietly:

*Oh, the rustling sheen of the blue-green grass,
Oh, the blue-green grass of the steppe!
Those far-off deeds
Well forever last,
Though the thunder has long rolled past.*

Shura listened in silence. Then, he joined in, softly at first. Then his voice gathered strength and mingled with Zoya's, and the two rang out pure and clear. They finished the song about the Cossack girl who fell in battle, fighting the bandit atamans, and Zoya began another, which we all loved, and which Anatoly Petrovich once used to sing.

*Roars and groans the Dnieper broad,
The angry wind tears off the leaves,
Low lies the lofty forest bowed,
In threatening waves the water heaves.*

And thus they worked and sang, and somehow I could hear them without listening: it was not the words that reached me, but the melody and feeling with which they sang. And I was happy, very happy....

In a week's time Shura took the finished work to his uncle and came back grinning broadly, with a fresh packet of drawings.

"He liked them! We'll have the money in a week. Do you hear that, Ma? Our money, Zoya's and mine, earned all by ourselves!"

"And d.d.n't Uncle Sergei have anything else to say?" I asked.

Shura shot me a shrewd glance and laughed. "He also said, 'That's the way, my boy!' "

And a week later, when I woke up in the morning, I saw on the chair beside me two pairs of stockings and a very beautiful white silk collar—the children had bought them for me out of their first earnings. And there too, in an envelope, lay the rest of the money.

And long after, coming home of an evening, I quite often heard my children singing while I was still on the steps. I knew then that they were busy again with their drawings.

VERA SERGEYEVNA

Our life went on smoothly, without anything special happening—at least, so it might have seemed to an outsider. On the surface, every new day resembled the one before: school and work, occasionally the theatre or a concert, and again lessons, books, a short rest—that was all. Actually, that was by no means all.

In the life of a child or an adolescent every hour is important. New worlds are constantly opening up before him. He begins to think independently and takes nothing for granted. He ponders over everything and decides afresh what is good and what is bad, what is high and noble, and what is low and base, what is real friendship, loyalty, justice, and what aim and purpose has he in life. Every hour, every minute, life awakens in him more and more new questions, forces him to search and think. And his reactions are keen and deep.

A book has long ago ceased to afford merely rest or distraction. No, it is a friend, an advisor, a leader. "Everything the books say is true!" Zoya used to repeat when she was little. Now she ponders over a book for hours on end, argues with it and expects the book to answer all her questions.

After the story of Tanya Solomakha we read Nikolai Ostrovsky's unforgettable book *How the Steel Was Tempered*, about Pavel Korchagin, about his pure and inspiring life—a book which never fails to leave its mark on the young reader's mind

And it left an indelible impression in the minds and hearts of my children.

Every new book is an event for the children. They talk about what they read as if it were real life. They argue hotly about the characters, whom they love or hate with all their heart.

A meeting with a good book—one that is wise, strong and honest—is so important in youth! Real people, of course, are no less important. One personal encounter can sometimes decide your future course in life.

School always meant a lot in the life of my children.

They loved and respected their teachers and spoke especially well of the study director Ivan Alexeyevich Yazev.

"He is a very good man and a very just teacher," Zoya would often repeat. "And what a gardener! We call him Michurin."

Shura always liked to tell about the Mathematics lessons, about how Nikolai Vasilyevich made you think and search for the answer, and how he would always catch out those who answered his questions at random or just learnt a rule mechanically.

"And he simply can't stand crammers and parrots! But if he sees that someone understands—that's a different matter. Even if you make a slip or two, he just says, 'Never mind, don't hurry think a moment.' And it's somehow easier to get at the right answer then!"

Both Zoya and Shura always spoke with special warmth of their class leader Yekaterina Mikhailovna. "She's so kind, and she always sticks up for us with the principal."

And indeed, I often heard that when someone was naughty in class and got into trouble, Yekaterina Mikhailovna was the first to intercede in his behalf.

Her subject was German. She never raised her voice, but her class was always very quiet. She was lenient, yet it never

occurred to any of her children to do their homework badly. She loved the children and they returned her love, and for that reason she never had any trouble over discipline at her lessons, nor over progress in her subject.

But an entirely new period in the lives of Zoya and Shura began on the day when their class began to study Russian Language and Literature under Vera Sergeyevna Novoselova.

Zoya and Shura were both very restrained in showing their feelings. The older they grew the more apparent this trait became. They shunned all high-flown words like the plague. Both of them were sparing with expressions of love, tenderness and delight, anger and dislike. It was rather by their eyes, by their silence, by the way Zoya would walk from one corner of the room to another when she was hurt or moved, that I knew of my children's feelings.

Once—Zoya was about twelve years old then—a boy began torturing and teasing a dog in the street in front of our window. He threw stones at it, pulled its tail, then put a bit of sausage right under its nose, and, just as it was about to snap up the tasty morsel, he would snatch it away again. Zoya saw all this through the window, and without waiting to put on her coat (it was late, cold autumn) ran out into the street. She had such a face that I was afraid she would hurl herself at the boy shouting and perhaps beating him with her fists. But she did not even raise her voice.

"Stop! You're not a boy, you're a wretch!" I heard Zoya say, as she ran down the steps.

She said it quietly but with such immense scorn that the boy seemed to shrivel up, and then he slunk away without a word....

"He is a good man," Zoya would say about someone, and that was enough for me to know that she had the greatest respect for the person in question

But neither Zoya nor Shura made any attempt to conceal their admiration for Vera Sergeyevna.

"If you only knew what she's like!" Zoya kept repeating.

"Well, what is she like? What do you like so much about her?"

"I can't explain..... Well, perhaps, I can. You see, when she comes into the class and begins to tell us about something, we all understand that she is not just going on with the lesson because she's got it down on her timetable. She herself feels that what she has to say is important and interesting. And she doesn't want us to learn everything by heart but to think and understand. The children say that she often prompts us to pull the people in books to pieces. And it's true. She asks us, 'You like him. Why do you like him? How in your opinion should he have acted?' And we don't even notice that she falls silent and it is we who do the talking. First one jumps up, then another. We argue, get angry, and then, when everyone has had his say, she begins herself—so simply, quietly, as if she were talking to three people, not thirty. And everything becomes clear at once: who's right and who's wrong. And you long to read everything she talks about! After you listen to her you read a book in quite a new way. You see a lot you missed before.... And then, we have her to thank that we really know Moscow now. At her very first lesson she asked us, 'Have you been to the Leo Tolstoy Museum? Have you been to the museum at Ostankino?' And then she said crossly, 'And you call yourself Moscovites!' And now, where haven't we been with her! We've been to all the museums! And every time she gives us something to think about."

"Yes, that's true, she's a very good person, very good!" added Shura.

He was nevertheless embarrassed by such sensitive words, and either to cover his embarrassment or so that it would sound

more emphatic, he always praised his teacher in a bass voice, which did not come easy to him. But his eyes and the expression of his face said clearly and unhesitatingly: she's wonderful!

It was when the class began reading Chernyshevsky that I really understood what is meant by awakened interest in literature, in a writer, in history.

A HIGH STANDARD

"Is your daughter a college student?" asked the librarian who used to give me the books on Zoya's list.

The lists were always long and varied. What did Zoya not read for her paper on the Paris Commune! There were historical works and translations from the French worker poets—Pottier and Clément. She read even more books about the Patriotic War of 1812. Her imagination was fired by Kutuzov and Bagration and the battles they fought, and she would rapturously repeat whole passages from Tolstoy's *War and Peace* by heart. Preparing for her report on Ilya muromets, the folklore hero, she made up a long list of rare books, which I sought out with difficulty in various libraries.

It was no news to me that Zoya could work seriously, go straight to the very deepest source, to the very heart of the matter, that she could bury herself in her subject. But before Chernyshevsky she had never given herself up to any pursuit so completely and unreservedly. The day she became acquainted with Chernyshevsky was one of the most important in Zoya's life.

When she came home from the lesson at which Vera Sergeyevna had told the children about Chernyshevsky's life, Zoya said, "I want to know *everything* about him, Mummy! And at school we've only got *What Is To Be Done?* Please find out what they have in your library. I should like to have a big full biography, and the correspondence and memoirs of his contemporaries. I want to be able to picture to myself what he was like in life"

A reticent girl, Zoya suddenly became talkative. Apparently she needed to share every thought, every discovery, every new spark ignited by the things she had read.

She would show me an old biography of Chernyshevsky, and say, "Here it says that in his first years as a student he took no interest in anything except study. But take a look at the Latin poetry he gave his cousin to translate: 'May justice triumph or the world perish!' Or this: 'May falsehood vanish or the heavens fall!' Could that just be by chance...? And here, from a letter to the literary critic A. N. Pypin: 'To work not for transient glory but for the eternal glory of your Fatherland and for the good of mankind—what can be higher and more desirable than this?' Mama, I won't bother you any more, but just listen to this. It's a note in his diary: 'I shall gladly give up my life for the triumph of my convictions! For the triumph of freedom, equality, brotherhood and prosperity, for the destruction of poverty and sin! If I am convinced that my convictions are just, and that they will triumph, I will not even regret not seeing the day when they shall triumph and rule, and death itself will be sweet, not bitter, be I only convinced of this'.... To think of anyone saying after that that he was only interested in study!"

Once she began to read *What Is To Be Done?* Zoya could not tear herself away from the book. She was so absorbed in it that for the first time in her life, I think, she forgot to warm up the dinner at the usual hour. She hardly noticed me come in. For a second she gazed at me with faraway, Unseeing eyes, and again bent over the book. Without disturbing her I lighted the kerosene stove, put on the soup, and took the bucket to pour water into the wash basin. It was only then that Zoya stirred, jumped up and grasped the bucket from me with the words, "I'll do it myself!"

That night, after supper was over, Shura and I went to bed. When I awoke late at night, Zoya was still reading. I got up, took the book from her in silence and placed it on the shelf.

Zoya looked at me guiltily and imploringly.

"It's difficult for me to sleep with the light, and I must be up early tomorrow," I said, knowing that only this would persuade her.

In the morning Shura could not resist teasing his sister. "You know, Mummy, Zoya dived into that book as soon as she came back from school yesterday. And I saw she was lost to the world. I expect she'll soon begin sleeping on nails like Rakhmetov."

Zoya said nothing, but in the evening she came home from school with a book quoting Georgi Dimitrov's words about Rakhmetov—how the Russian writer's hero had become a model for the young Bulgarian worker taking his first steps in the revolutionary movement. Dimitrov wrote how in his youth he had striven to become just as firm, strong-willed and seasoned as Rakhmetov, how he had striven to subjugate his own personal life to the great cause—the struggle for the liberation of the toilers.

"The Life of Chernyshevsky"—was the theme of Zoya's next essay. She read and searched tirelessly for more and more material, and frequently unearthed facts of which I had no knowledge.

Zoya described the civil (i.e., mock) execution of Chernyshevsky with laconic eloquence. The dull wet morning, the scaffold with the black post and chains, and the black board with the white letters "State Criminal," which they hung on Chernyshevsky's neck.....

Then, the three months of hard exhausting travel, hundreds and thousands of long endless versts. And at last Kadya—the remote Siberian convict settlement where the tsarist government tried to extinguish "the bright torch of banished science."

In one of her books Zoya found an ink drawing or rather a sketch, done by one of the political exiles, of the hut where Chernyshevsky lived. Shura, stirred by Zoya's enthusiasm,

copied this sketch into her notebook, and succeeded in conveying the main thing: the despair gripping the cold deserted region. The hard line of the horizon, the marsh, the sandy wastes, a thin dwarfish forest, the crosses on the graves—all this seemed crushed by the low sullen skies; and crushed also by a terrible weight was the little hut itself, behind the walls of which one could expect neither warmth, nor comfort, nor joy.....

The years dragged on in loneliness.....A cheerless dreary life. And the more incredible seemed the letters which Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky wrote to his wife and children, letters full of warmth, light, tenderness and love, which took months to arrive through the night and snow.

Thus passed seven long years. What a remarkable letter Chernyshevsky writes on the eve of his release to his wife Olga Sokratovna!

"My dear friend, my joy, my only love and thought... I write to you on the anniversary of our wedding. My dear joy, I thank you for bringing light to my life.... On the 10th of August I shall cease to be idle and useless to you and the children. By the autumn I think I shall find a place in Irkutsk, or near Irkutsk, and shall be able to work as before... Soon everything will begin to go right... From this autumn....."

Every word breathes the confidence and hope that they will meet soon. But instead—exile to Vilyuisk, and another thirteen long years of loneliness! The cold severe winter lasting half a year, and all round marshland and tundra. These are the hardest years of imprisonment, not even lightened by the hope of release. There is nothing ahead. Only loneliness, and the night and snow. . . .

And then there comes to Chernyshevsky a Colonel Vinnikov who hands him the government's proposal that he should send in a petition for pardon. Release and return to his native land is the promised reward.

"For what should I ask pardon?" replies Chernyshevsky. "That is the question.....It seems to me that I have been exiled merely because my head and the head of the chief of the gendarmerie Shuvalov vary in structure, and can one ask pardon for that? Thank you for your pains.... I absolutely refuse to ask for pardon....."

And once again time dragged on. Day after day, year after year life ebbed away.

His is an active, mighty mind which so longs to work and create, which can see so far into the future! It is his hand that wrote those wrathful and impassioned proclamations to the Russian peasants. It was his voice that urged Herzen not to call to prayer in his *Kolokol* but to call on Russia to take up the axe. All his life he devoted to one thing, strove always towards one goal—that the oppressed should obtain freedom. Even to his bride he said once: "I do not belong to myself, I have chosen another path which threatens me with prison and exile." And this man was condemned to what was for him the most terrible torture—inactivity. He was not even allowed to shake the hand of his dying friend and bid him a word of farewell.

Nekrasov was dying—the news was a cruel blow to Chernyshevsky. "If Nekrasov still breathes when you receive my letter," he wrote to Pypin, "tell him that I love him dearly as a human being, that I thank him for his kind disposition towards me, that I kiss him, that I am convinced his fame will be immortal, that Russia's love for him, the most noble, the most brilliant of all Russian Poets, is eternal. I sob for him....."

This letter took three months to arrive—and reached Nekrasov when he was still alive. "Tell Nikolai Gavrilovich", the dying man said, "that I am very grateful to him. Now I am comforted: his words are dearer to me than those of anyone else...."

After twenty years of hard labour and exile Chernyshevsky at last returns to his native parts. He is full of impatience and

impetuosity. He rushes on, without stopping anywhere, without giving himself an hour's rest through the whole of his long difficult journey. At last he reaches Astrakhan. And here again comes a cruel blow: Chernyshevsky is deprived of the opportunity to work. Who, what magazine will publish the articles of a "state criminal"? And again inactivity, again silence, and emptiness all round.....

Not long before Chernyshevsky's death he was visited by the writer Korolenko. Nikolai Gavrilovich refused to be pitied, recalls Korolenko. "He always had complete control of himself, and if he suffered—and could he help suffering cruelly!—he always suffered proudly, by himself, not sharing his bitter grief with anyone."

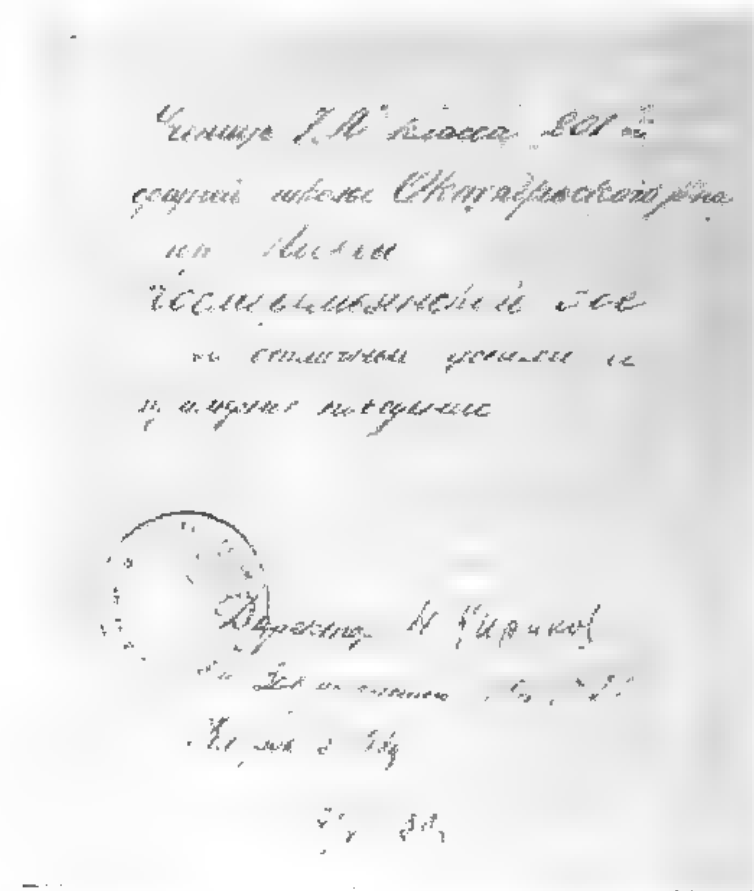
Zoya read us her essay aloud. Both Shura and I said what we thought, "Very good!"

"One day," said Shura, pacing about the room, "I mean to paint a big picture. It will be called 'The Civil Execution of Chernyshevsky.' "

"That's what Herten wrote," Zoya quickly put in. "He wrote: 'Will not someone paint a picture-Chernyshevsky in the pillory?' He said that such a picture would expose—how did he put it?—would expose the obtuse scoundrels who pilloried human thought."

"I can see it all," went on Shura, hardly letting her finish. "Both the girl who threw flowers to him, and the officer who shouted 'Farewell!' And I can see Chernyshevsky himself at that moment, you know, when the executioner broke the sword above his head..... They have forced Chernyshevsky to his knees, but all the same, you can see at once from his face that he is not conquered and never will be conquered!"

The next day I had scarcely appeared at the door when Shura shouted, "Mama, Vera Sergeyevna called out Zoya! And, just think, she asked about the life and work of Chernyshevsky!"



When she finished the seventh grade Zoya received a school prize, *Selected Works of Taras Shevchenko*. Here is the inscription on the title page, which reads: "To Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, pupil of Grade 7-A, Secondary School No. 201, October District, Moscow, for excellent study and exemplary conduct."

"Well?"

" 'Excellent!' 'Excellent!' The whole class listened open mouthed. Me too, although I knew it so well already! And Vera Sergeyevna was very pleased!"

Zoya received an "excellent" for her essay too.

"She deserved it," I said.

"Not half!" exclaimed Shura.

One might have thought that the "excellent" would mark the completion of Zoya's work. But it was not so. Her acquaintance with Chernyshevsky, his life and his books, meant very much to Zoya. Chernyshevsky became for her a high standard of thought and deed. That was the real sum total of Zoya's work on her essay.

"EXCELLENT" FOR CHEMISTRY

Zoya studied very well although she found some subjects difficult. Sometimes she would sit up till late at night over Mathematics and Physics, and would never let Shura help her.

Here is a familiar picture. It is evening. Shura has done his lessons long ago, but Zoya is still sitting at the table.

"What are doing?"

"Algebra. The problem won't come out."

"Let me show you."

"No, I'll think it out myself."

Half an hour passes. And an hour.

"I'm going to bed!" says Shura angrily. "Here's the answer. Look, I've put it off the table."

Zoya does not even turn her head. Shura shrugs his shoulders and gets into bed. Zoya sits up for a long time. If sleep threatens to overcome her, she rinses her face in cold water and again sits down at the table. The answer to the problem lies beside her. She has only to put out her hand. . . But Zoya doesn't even look in that direction.

The next day she gets an "excellent" for Algebra, and this does not surprise anyone in her class. But Shura and I know full well what that "excellent" has cost her

Shura, who was very capable and quick at grasping things, often prepared his lessons carelessly and came home with a "fair." And every fair mark of her brother's grieved Zoya far more than it grieved him.

"It's your work, don't you understand? You have no right to treat your work like that!"

Shura would only frown and sigh. Sometimes he would burst out, "Well, d'you think I'm not capable of understanding all this great wisdom?"

"If you are, prove it! It's not enough to just look through a book and drop it. Once you've begun something, read it to the end! Then you can speak of how capable you are. I hate people doing things just anyhow. It's disgusting!"

"Zoya; why are you so glum?"

"I got an 'excellent' for Chemistry," answers Zoya unwillingly.

My face wears such an expression of surprise that Shura cannot resist laughing loudly

"Do you mean to say you are sorry you got an excellent mark?" I ask, unable to believe my ears.

"You see," says Shura while Zoya keeps stubbornly silent, "she thinks that she does not deserve the mark, that she doesn't know chemistry that well."

There is strong disapproval in Shura's voice.

Zoya rests her chin in her cupped hands, and looks from Shura to me with dark unhappy eyes.

"Shura's right," she says, "I did not get any joy out of that 'excellent.' I thought and thought, and at last I went to see Vera Alexandrovna and said, 'I don't know your subject excellently.' And she looks at me and answers, 'Once you talk like that it means you will soon. We shall consider that I have given you an "excellent" in advance.' "

"And she probably thought you were putting it on!" Shura exclaims angrily.

"No, she didn't!" Zoya draws herself up, her cheeks burning.

"If Vera Alexandrovna is wise and just, and knows anything at all about her pupils, she won't think that of Zoya," I put in, seeing how Shura's words have stung and hurt Zoya.

That same evening, when Zoya had left the house on some errand, Shura again brought up the subject of the Chemistry mark.

"Mum, I didn't blame Zoya today for nothing," he began with unusual seriousness. He stood with his back to the window, the palms of his hands resting on the window ledge, his brows knitted. And between his eyebrows a slanting angry furrow appeared.

Somewhat surprised, I waited for what was to come.

"You see, Mum, Zoya sometimes acts in a way no one can understand. Take this mark now. Well, anyone else in our class would be glad to get an 'excellent,' and no one would even think of considering whether it was deserved or not. The Chemistry teacher gave it to you, and that's that. No, Zoya is asking too much of herself! Or take that happened a day or two ago. Borya Fomenkov wrote a clever composition. He knows he makes a lot of mistakes. So he went and wrote at the end, quoting Pushkin:

*"Like ruby lips that do not smile,
I do not like my native speech
Without grammatical mistakes".*

"Everyone laughed but Zoya blamed him. That's his work, she says, his job, and it's not something to joke about....."

"What gets me," went on Shura hotly, "is that she does like jokes and does like a laugh, but no one could think that of her at school. A fellow's only got to start a rag..... have a bit of fun that is," he corrected himself catching my look, "no harm in it, you know, and Zoya is down on him with a lecture straightaway. You can't imagine what a row there was in the class yesterday! There was a dictation, and one girl asks Zoya how to spell a difficult word. And just think, Zoya refused to answer her! When the bell rang the whole class divided up, half and half, and there was almost a fight: some shouted that Zoya's a bad comrade, and others that she acted on principle....."

"And what did you shout?"

"Oh, me, I didn't shout anything. But, mind you, if I'd been in her place I'd never have refused a comrade."

"Listen, Shura," I said after a minute's silence. "When Zoya has trouble with her mathematics, and you have done yours long ago, does Zoya ask you to help her?"

"No, she doesn't."

"Remember how she sat up till four o'clock in the morning to work out that complicated algebra problem?"

"Well?"

"Well, I think that someone who is so strict and exacting towards oneself, has a right to be exacting towards others. Most children, I know, hold prompting sacred. It was the law when I went to school. But it's a wicked old law. I can't respect those who live on prompting and crampapers. And I respect Zoya for having the courage of her opinions."

"Well, some of the kids said that too. They said that Zoya is straight and says what she thinks. Petya said that if there was something he didn't understand, Zoya would never refuse to explain, but during a test prompting is dishonest. But all the same....."

"But all the same?"

"All the same, it's not comradely."

"If Zoya refused to help and explain, that, Shura, would be uncomradely. But to refuse to prompt someone, now that, I think, is a comradely action. A straight and honest one."

I saw that Shura was not convinced. He stood at the window for a long time, just turning over the pages of his book, and I realized that his argument with himself was still going on.

* * *

Nevertheless, Shura's story struck an alarming note.

Zoya Was a lively, merry girl. She loved the theatre, and if she went to a play without us, she would always describe what she had seen and heard so expressively and with such warmth that Shura and I would feel we had seen the play ourselves. Zoya's sense of humour rarely deserted her. Through her usual gravity there would burst gleams of the irrepressible humour which she had inherited from her father, and then we would laugh the whole evening, recalling various amusing incidents..... Sometimes Zoya will be talking in her usual voice, and suddenly, almost imperceptibly and without the hint of a smile, she changes her tone, the expression of her face... Recognizing the person she is imitating, Shura and I laugh till the tears run down our cheeks.

I can see Zoya bending her back slightly, pursing her lips and saying sedately, between long pauses, "Don't take me amiss, my dears, but I can tell you this..... You are young, you won't believe it, but if a cat runs across the road, trouble is sure to follow....."

And before us, large as life, appears the image of an old woman, our neighbour in the old flat. "Akulina Borisovna!" cries Shura.

Now Zoya frowns and says severely, in a jerky voice, "What's

all this disorder? Stop it at once! Or else I shall be obliged to take measures!"

We laugh as we recognize the school watchman in Aspen Woods

Zoya loved visitors and felt completely at ease with grownups. When Uncle Sergei, or my sister Olga, or one of my comrades at work paid us a visit, Zoya did not know where best to put them or what good things she could treat them to. She bustled round excitedly, treated them to her own cooking, and was hurt when the visitors had no time to stay.

But at school, with children of her own age, Zoya often seemed reserved and unsociable. And that worried me.

"Why don't you have any friends?" I asked her once.

"Aren't you my friend?" Zoya retorted. "And isn't Shura a friend? And am I not friendly with Ira?" She paused and then added with a smile, "It's Shura who's got half a classful of friends. I can't be like that."

ALONE WITH ONESELF

"Zoya, what are you writing?"

"Nothing particular."

That means that Zoya is sitting over the thick squared notebook with a calico binding—her diary.

Zoya rarely takes it up now and never writes much.

"Let's have a peep!" asks Shura.

Zoya shakes her head.

"So you don't want to show it to your brother? All right then!"

Shura's angry, threatening tone is, of course, a joke, but there is a hint of resentment in it.

"My own brother will read it and then start laughing at me," answers Zoya. But afterwards she says quietly to me, "You can read it if you like."

It was a strange diary, not a bit like the one Zoya had kept at

twelve years old. She did not describe any private events, but would write in just a few words, or a phrase from a book, or a line of poetry. But behind the words and poetry of others I could see what my girl was thinking about, what worried her.

Among others I found this note:

"Friendship means sharing everything, everything! And having thoughts and plans in common. Sharing joy and grief. It seems to me that what they write in books about only people with opposite characters making friends, is untrue. The more there is in common, the better it is. I should like to have a friend whom I could trust with all my secrets. I am friends with Ira, but although we are the same age it always seems to me that she is younger."

There were these lines from Nikolai Ostrovsky:

"Man's dearest possession is life, and it is given to him to live but once. So he must live as to feel no torturing regrets for misspent years, so he must live that, dying, he can say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the Liberation of Mankind."

There were also these words—whether they belonged to Zoya or not I have no way of knowing:

"He who does not think too much of himself is much better than he thinks."

And again:

"Respect yourself, but do not have too high an opinion of yourself. Do not shut yourself up in your shell, and do not be one-sided. Do not shout that people do not respect or value you. Work harder to perfect yourself, and you will have more confidence."

I shut the notebook with a strange complex feeling. Its pages gave me a glimpse of budding, questing thought—as of someone searching for a road, coming out onto the right way, and then losing and finding it again. It was a large clear mirror where

every movement of the heart and mind was reflected.

I decided not to read Zoya's diary any more. It does us good to be alone with ourselves for a while, to look into ourselves, to think things over, safe from intruding eyes, even if they are the eyes of a mother.

"Thanks for trusting me," I said to Zoya. "But the diary is yours, and no one should be allowed to read it."

THE LEADER'S VOW

In the summer of 1938 Zoya began to prepare herself to enter the Komsomol. She went over the rules and regulations again and again, and would ask Shura to test her to see if she had remembered and absorbed everything.

One very memorable event for me is connected with that period.

"Mum," said Shura one day, "look what an old newspaper! It's all yellow. Look at the date: 1924."

The newspaper was *Pravda* and the date—January 30, 1924. Silently I took the newspaper sheet. And it all came back to me in a flash: The frosty February day, the village reading room full of people, and in the deep stillness Anatoly Petrovich reading to the peasants Stalin's vowspeech.

"Where did you get this paper?" I asked.

"You told me I could put my school things in Father's drawer. I opened it and saw a folded newspaper there. I unfolded it and....."

"Yes, I hid it away then. I meant Zoya to read it when she grew up. She was not six months old then."

"So it's my newspaper?" said Zoya.

She carefully spread out the sheet, which was fragile with age, on the table, bent over it, and began reading.....

"Read it out loud," said Shura.

And again the words rang out, which had remained so clear in my memory from that far-off day.

"Like a huge rock, our country towers amid an ocean of bourgeois states. Wave after wave dashes against it, threatening to submerge it and wash it away. But the rock stands unshakable. Wherein lies its strength"

Zoya knew this speech already. But she read the familiar words in a new way now: the yellow sheet of newsprint was a witness of those days, it brought home to you with special force all the grandeur of the words it carried.

"We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that this behest, too, we will fulfill with credit!" read Zoya slowly.

The next day she brought home from the library Joseph Stalin's speech delivered at a memorial meeting of the Kremlin military school. And I remember I was glad that Zoya's acquaintance with the works of Stalin had begun in this particular way. So lucid and convincing are both the profound thought of Stalin's speeches and the examples and events they contain, so clear are they to the youngest beginner that the words of our leader went straight to the heart and mind of the fifteen-year-old girl.

I find it hard to remember just what books were on the long list that was opened by that memorable old newspaper. Zoya read Stalin's report to the Eighteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.), then his report at the Extraordinary Eighth Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. on the Draft Constitution. It was very important for her to test her understanding of what she read, to be able to say to herself—yes, this is all clear and near to me.

And then a new note appeared in her diary. She showed it to me. It was some lines from Henri Barbusse's book *Stalin*.

"The man whose profile is painted on the red placards, alongside of Karl Marx and Lenin, is the man who takes care of everything and everybody, who has created what is and is creating what will be.... Whoever you are, you stand in need of this friend. And whoever you are, all that is best in your life

rests in the hands of this man, who is vigilant and works for all, the man with the head of a scholar, the face of a worker and the clothes of a plain soldier."

THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING

When school started in the autumn Shura said to me:

"Now I see that our class respects Zoya. There are some others preparing for the Komsomol too, and they are always coming to her with questions. The Komsomol committee could not have given her a better character: conscientious reliable and trustworthy, and anything else you like. And at the general meeting, very solemn it was, Zoya came out and told them her biography. They asked her all sorts of questions and then they began to consider her application. And everyone, every man jack of them, said she's honest, straight, a good comrade, does all her social work, helps those who are behind....."

I remember when she wrote her autobiography, Zoya got everything in on one page, and was very worried.

"I've got nothing to write about," she cried. "I was born, went to school, now I'm studying...But what have I done? Not a thing"

That day, I think, Shura was no less excited than Zoya herself. I had never seen him in such a state before. He waited for Zoya outside the District Committee. There were a lot of applicants, and Zoya was called in near the end. "I could hardly wait!" Shura told us afterwards.

I, too, could hardly wait. I kept on looking out of the window to see if they were coming, but night was closing in, and I could not make anything out.

Then I went out into the street and walked slowly in the direction of the District Committee. I had taken not more than a few paces before they rushed up to me, panting and excited.

"Accepted! Answered all the questions!" they shouted with one accord.

We went back to the house and Zoya, blushing happily, began to recount everything that had happened.

"The Secretary of the District Committee is so young and cheerful. He asked me a lot of questions: what is the Komsomol, then about the events in Spain, then he asked me what works of Marx I knew. I said I had only read the *Communist Manifesto*. And near the end he asked, 'What, in your opinion, is the most important thing in the Regulations?' I thought and said, 'The most important thing is that a Komsomol member must be ready to give all his strength to his Country and, if necessary, his life.' That is the most important thing, isn't it? But he said, 'Well, and what about studying and carrying out your Komsomol duties?' I was surprised, and answered: 'Well, that goes without saying.' Then he pulled back the curtain, pointed at the sky and said, 'What's up there?' Again I was surprised, and replied, 'Nothing.' 'But do you see how many beautiful stars there are? You didn't even notice them at first, and all because they too go without saying. And remember one other thing: everything that's good and big in life is made out of things that are small and insignificant. Don't you ever forget that!' That was well said, wasn't it?"

"Very!" answered Shura and I in one voice.

"Then," Zoya went on, "he asked whether I had read Lenin's speech at the Third Congress of the Komsomol. 'Of course!' I answered. And do you remember it well?" he asked. 'By heart, I think.' 'Well, if you know it by heart, tell me the most memorable place in it.' And I said, 'And so, the generation which is now fifteen years old, and which in ten or twenty years' time will be living in communist society, must approach all their tasks in education in such a way that every day, in every village and in every town, the young people shall engage in the practical solution of some problem of common labour, even though the smallest, even though the simplest.' "

"Zoya, do you happen to remember the first time you heard what Vladimir Ilyich said at the Third Congress?" I asked, almost certain that she would not be able to answer me.

But I was wrong.

"It was in the summer camp," answered Zoya without hesitation. "By the campfire...."

Then we sat and drank tea, and Zoya kept on recalling more and more details of the day. And when we were going to bed she said, "I feel as if I had changed in some way and become somehow different, a new person."

"Well, in that case let's introduce ourselves," I said, unable to hide a smile, but by Zoya's eyes I saw that just now she was in no mood for joking, and I added "I understand, Zoya."

THE HOUSE

IN STAROPETROVSKY STREET

Alexander Herzen once said, "Nothing ennobles youth so much as a strongly awakened interest in humanity." When I recall how my children and their school comrades were brought up, I think: Yes, it was just that which made their youth inspired and beautiful. Everything which took place in our country and beyond its frontiers concerned them directly and was their personal affair.



Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya's
Komsomol card

Zoya and Shura grew with their country—not as spectators but as active participators in everything that went on around them. A newly built factory, the daring idea of a Soviet scientist, the success of Soviet musicians at an international competition—it was all a part of their life, inseparable from their personal destiny. They would think about these things, so near and dear to them, and discuss them endlessly at school and at home. And this was their education.

Zoya's talk with the Secretary of the District Committee did not just stay in her mind. It lodged itself in her memory, and every word he had spoken that day, the day of her second birth, became a law for her.

Zoya had always been surprisingly exact and conscientious about carrying out her duties. But now she put every ounce of her strength, all her heart and soul into every task she was entrusted with. For now she knew for a certainty that her work was a part of the great common task outlined by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Very soon after entering the Komsomol Zoya was elected organizer of a Komsomol group. She at once made out a list of Komsomol assignments. "Everyone who calls himself a Komsomol member must have Komsomol job," was her motto. She asked everybody what they were interested in and what work they wished to do. "Then the work will go better," she remarked when talking to me. She knew most of the answers beforehand for she had taken good notice of her classmates. The list of duties was long and detailed: one was responsible for schoolwork, another for physical culture, a third—for the wall newspaper.... There was a job for everyone. Zoya and a few other Komsomol members were to teach some illiterate women in one of the houses in Staropetrovsky Street.

"That's a difficult job," I told Zoya. "And it's a long way off, and you won't very well be able to drop it. Have you thought of that?"

"What are you talking about, Mummy!" Zoya flared up. "Drop it? Once we start a job....."

On her first free evening Zoya set off for Staropetrovsky Street. When she came back she told us that her pupil was an elderly woman who could neither read nor write but was willing to learn.

"Just think, she can't even write her name properly!" said Zoya. "She's up to her neck in work—housework and children. But she will study, I'm sure. She was pleased to see me and called me 'my pet'....."

Zoya borrowed a book from me on the method of teaching people to read and write, and sat till late at night over it. She began visiting her pupil twice a week, and nothing—neither rain, nor snow, nor tiredness—could stop her.

"If there's an earthquake she'll go just the same. If there's a fire she'll still say she cannot let her Lydia Ivanovna down," Shura would say.

And although sometimes there were irritation and mockery in his voice, he often went out to meet Zoya after her lessons, because the autumn was wet and gloomy, and we were worried about Zoya coming home in the darkness and the mud. Shura rather liked going to meet his sister and accompanying her home. Let Zoya feel what it meant to have a brother—a protector, a Supporter, a man in the family!

Shura, broad-shouldered and strong, was taller now than Zoya.

"Look what muscles!" he loved to say.

And Zoya would answer in happy pride and wonder, "Yes, Mama, feel what muscles he's got—they're like iron!"

One day I brought home three tickets for a concert in the Great Hall of the Conservatory. They were playing Chaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. Zoya was very fond of it, and assured us that every time she heard it the music brought her some new delight.

"The more familiar the music is, the more it affects you. I've had proof of that so many times," she told me once.

Zoya looked very glad when I brought the tickets, but suddenly she seemed to groan inwardly. She put her forefinger to her lips and bit it slightly, as she always did when she suddenly remembered something that had escaped her memory.

"But, Mama, it's on Thursday!" she cried. "I can't go. I go to Lydia Ivanovna on Thursdays."

"What nonsense!" Shura burst out indignantly "How tragic if you don't go for once!"

"It's no use. I can't bear to think of her waiting for me for nothing."

"I'll go and warn her that you won't be coming."

"Once you start a job you ought to finish it. She waiting for me to come for the lesson and I go to a concert? No, I can't do that."

And Zoya did not attend that Chaikovsky concert.

"There's character for you " Shura kept saying with a mixture of indignation and involuntary respect for his sister in his voice.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

It was New Year's eve 1939.

Zoya came home from school and told me that the girls in her class had been writing each other New Year's wishes. You have to burn the paper with the wish written on it and then swallow the ashes just as the Kremlin clock strikes midnight.

"Those girls!" scoffed Shura.

"Perhaps I won't swallow mine," laughed Zoya, "I don't suppose it tastes very nice, but I don't mind reading it "

She took out of her pocket a small note, carefully folded and sealed, and read it out loud:

"Zoya, do not judge people so strictly. Don't take everything

so much to heart. Know that nearly all people are egotists, flatterers and insincere, and that you cannot rely on them. Take no heed of their words. Such are my wishes to you for the New Year."

Zoya's frown deepened with every word, and when she had finished it she threw the note violently aside.

"If you think that about people, why live?" she said.

Zoya was soon carried away by the preparations for the New Year's Eve fancy-dress ball. The girls had decided to dress up in the national costumes of the Soviet Union. We thought for a long time what we should dress Zoya in.

"As a Ukrainian," Shura suggested. "She's got good eyes and her eyebrows are all right. Why shouldn't she be a black-browed Ukrainian lass? She has an embroidered blouse and a skirt. All she needs are beads and ribbons"

Later that evening, when we were alone together, Shura said to me, "Listen here, Mum, we ought to buy Zoya some new shoes. All the girls in the class have got shoes with some special kind of heels—not very high but still....."

"Medium heels," I prompted him.

"That's it. And Zoya's wearing the same as boys do."

"We shan't manage it this month, Shura."

"But I don't need a new shirt. And I don't really need a cap."

"Your hat is not fit to be seen."

"But, Mama, I'm a boy and Zoya's a girl. Grown-up, too. It means more to her."

And indeed, it did mean a lot to her.

I remember coming home once and finding Zoya in front of the mirror, trying on a dress of mine. On hearing my footsteps she turned round quickly.

"How do I look?" she asked with a shy smile.

She liked trying on my dresses, and took great joy in every

new purchase. She never asked me to buy her new things, and was always content with what I made for her myself. Nevertheless Shura was right: she could not help caring about it.

We scraped together the necessary sum, and after a hot argument with us, Zoya went and bought herself a pair of black shoes with medium heels.

We also got up a New Year costume with beads and ribbons. We washed and ironed Shura's shirt and arrayed him in a new tie. And off my children went to school, smart and excited. I stood for a long time at the window, watching them go.

It was a surprisingly light calm evening. Outside, the fluffy snowflakes kept falling slowly. Zoya and Shura will pass through this snowy stillness and plunge right into the colourful and noisy throng, so merry and young; and from the bottom of my heart I wished that the whole of the New Year would for them be just as bright, gay and happy.

They did not come back till early morning; it had been quite a ball at school, with music and "dancing till you dropped," as Shura put it.

"We played at Post, and some nut kept on writing to Zoya that she's got beautiful eyes. Really he did! And in the end he even burst into poetry! Here, listen to this!"

Shura stood up, struck a pose, and hardly able to restrain his laughter read the lines:

*Such a clear-eyed lass you are—
My heart is fit to die!
And all your soul, so great and deep,
Is shining in your eye.*

And all three of us laughed away.

Towards the end of the winter it happened that the very girl who had written Zoya the New Year wish about human egotism

and of how one can never rely on people, stopped teaching her housewife-pupil.

"It's a very long journey," she explained to Zoya, her group organizer. "And they give us so much homework to do! I simply 'haven't the time for the job. Take it off my hands."

Zoya's eyes were black with anger when she told me about it. "That's something I cannot understand. She undertook the job and then dropped it! And she did not even think that by doing so she was letting everybody else down, not only herself. Does she call herself a Komsomol girl? And suppose she happens to meet this woman in the street—how can she look her in the face? And everyone in the class?"

Zoya herself did not miss giving her lessons once. One Thursday she had a splitting headache, but she overcame it and went just the same.

Shura and I would always be informed quickly and in detail of every success on the part of Zoya's pupil.

"Lydia Ivanovna remembers all the letters already. . ."

"Lydia Ivanovna can already read in syllables....."

"Lydia Ivanovna can read fluently now!" Zoya at last informed us triumphantly. "Remember how she couldn't even sign her name? And now her handwriting is getting good."

That evening when she went to bed Zoya said, "You know, Mama, I have been going about all the week thinking what good thing has happened to me. And then it came to me in a flash: Lydia Ivanovna can read! Now I understand why you became a teacher!"

SAD DAYS

The autumn of 1940 unexpectedly turned out a very sad one for us.

Zoya was washing the floor. She dipped the rag into the bucket, bent down and suddenly fainted. That was how I found

her, in a dead faint, when I came home from work. Shura, who had entered the room at the same time, dashed off to call up the ambulance, which arrived and took Zoya away to the Botkin hospital. There the diagnosis was: "Meningitis."

It was a difficult time for Shura and me. For whole nights and days we could think only of one thing: Will Zoya live...? Her life was in danger. The professor who was treating her wore a gloomy troubled expression on his face while he was talking to me. It seemed to me there was no hope.

Shura went to the hospital several times a day. His face, usually clear and open, became more and more troubled and gloomy.

Zoya's illness had taken a critical course. They made injections into her spinal cord—it was an agonizing operation.

Once, after one of these injections, Shura and I came to find out how Zoya was. The nurse looked at us keenly and said, "The professor will speak to you in a moment."

I went cold.

"What's happened to her?" I asked in what must have been a very frightened voice, because the professor, who had come out that minute, hastened up to me with the words, "Don't worry now, everything's all right! She's on the road to recovery. Everything's going swimmingly. Your daughter is a very brave staunch girl. She has enormous grit, she never groans or cries." And with a glance at Shura he asked good-naturedly, "Are you like that too?"

That day they let me see Zoya for the first time. She was lying quite still and could not even raise her head. I sat beside her, holding her hand, unconscious of the tears that were streaming down my face.

"Don't cry," said Zoya quietly, with an effort. "I feel better."

And indeed the illness was subsiding. Shura and I were greatly relieved. It was as if the pain which had held us fast all

through these long weeks had suddenly let us go, leaving in its stead a feeling of utter exhaustion. During Zoya's illness we had become tired, more tired than we had ever been before. It seemed as if an awful weight which had been pressing on us for a long time was suddenly lifted, but we lacked the strength at first to straighten our backs and draw breath.

Some days later Zoya said, "Bring me something to read, please."

After a time the doctor actually did allow me to bring her books, and Zoya was delighted. It was still difficult for her to talk, and she got tired quickly, but she read in spite of it all.

I brought her Gadar's *The Blue Cup* and *The Fate of the Drummer*.

"What a wonderful story!" she said after reading *The Blue Cup*. "Nothing exciting happens, but you cannot tear yourself away from it!"

Her recovery was slow. At first they let Zoya sit up, and only some time later was she allowed to walk.

She made friends with everybody in the ward. An elderly woman in the bed next to Zoya's said to me once, "We'll be sorry to part with your daughter. She's such a darling. She can cheer up even the worst cases."

And the doctor who was treating Zoya would often jest, "I'd gladly adopt Zoya for my own daughter!"

The nurses were also on the best of terms with Zoya, and would give her books, while the professor himself brought her newspapers which, when she became a little stronger, she read aloud to the patients in the ward.

Soon Shura was allowed to see Zoya. They had not seen each other for a long time. At the sight of her brother Zoya sat up in bed and blushed to the roots of her hair. As for Shura, he bore himself in the ward as he always did among strangers: he looked round in alarm at Zoya's neighbours, went so red in the face

that the perspiration broke out on his forehead, wiped his face with his handkerchief, and finally stopped in the middle of the ward, not knowing where else to go.

"Come here, Shura, sit down there", urged Zoya. "Quick, tell me what's happening at school. And don't look so awkward," she added in a whisper. "No one is looking at you."

Somehow Shura pulled himself together, and in answer to Zoya's repeated questioning—"What going on at school? Tell me, quick!"—he pulled out of his breast pocket a little book with Lenin's profile stamped on it, exactly like the one Zoya had received in February 1939.

"A Komsomol card!" exclaimed Zoya.

"I didn't tell you so that it would be a surprise. I knew you'd be glad."

And forgetting the unusual surroundings Shura plunged into a detailed account of what questions they had asked him at the general meeting, what they had said to him at the District Committee and how the Secretary had asked, "Are you Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya's brother? I remember her. Don't forget to give her my regards!"

HOME AGAIN

During Zoya's illness Shura did a lot of drawing work. He would draw till late at night and sometimes even in the morning before going to school. Then he handed in the drawings and received the money, but did not give it to me as he had always done in the past.

I asked no questions, knowing that in good time he himself would say what he wanted to do with the money. I was not mistaken. The day before we were to go to the hospital to fetch Zoya, Shura said, "Here you are, Mum. Here's the money for a new dress for Zoya. Thought I'd buy the cloth, but she'd better do that herself. Let her choose what she likes."

Zoya came out of the ward to meet us, pale and thin, but her eyes were shining. She hugged me and Shura, who at once looked round in fright to see if anyone was watching.

"Come on, I want to go home!" said Zoya hurriedly, as if afraid they would put her back into the ward.

And we started off very gently, halting every now and then because we were afraid of tiring her. But Zoya wanted to go quicker. She kept staring at everything hungrily, like one who had been locked up indoors for a long time. She would screw up her eyes at the cold bright sun and smile. I could see that she was thrilled by the crunch of snow under her feet, the trees fluffy with hoarfrost, and the tiny glittering sparks that danced merrily in the air. A faint pink glow appeared on her cheeks.

At home she went slowly round the room, touching everything: she smoothed her pillow, patted the tablecloth and the edge of the cupboard, turned over the pages of one or two books, as if she were making the acquaintance of all these ordinary things all over again. And then Shura came up to her. He was at once grave and bashful.

"This is for you to buy a new dress with," he said holding out the money.

"Thank you very much," answered Zoya gravely.

She did not argue or protest as she usually did when there was a suggestion of buying something for her. And her face showed that she was pleased and touched.

"Lie down now, you're tired!" Shura commanded her, and Zoya complied just as obediently and gratefully.

While I was busy arranging sanatorium accommodation for Zoya, she did not attend school. She stayed at home and took up her books.

"I would very much like you to stay for a second term," I said cautiously. "You must not study seriously yet."

"No, not on any account!" answered Zoya shaking her head obstinately. "After I've been to the sanatorium I'm going to study like a tiger (she smiled fleetingly, as she used one of Shura's sayings). And in the summer I will study, too. I mean to catch up. Or else, what a nice thing will be: Shura younger than me and finishing school first! No, not for anything!"

Zoya delighted in life like one who has just escaped mortal danger.

She would sing from morning till night: when doing her hair in front of the mirror, sweeping the floor, sewing... Often she would sing Beethoven's *Klärchen's Song*, which she linked very much:

*The drums are beating, the flute doth play,
My dear one is leading his men to the fray,
The regiment marches at his behest.
Oh, how my heart burns in my breast!*

*Oh, were but a helmet and mail to hand,
I would defend my native land!
Where'er they went in their steps I'd march.
Behold, the enemy's line doth wave,
What joy to be a soldier brave!*

Zoya's voice rang with the joy of living. And as she sang them even the melancholy lines of *Mountain Heights* seemed full of quiet joy and hope:

*No dust upon the way,
No leaf stirs in the dell.
Wait a little, pray,
You shall rest as well.*

During these days Shura would often make Zoya sit by the window and draw her.

"You know what," he said thoughtfully once, "I read once that from his childhood days Surikov loved to study people's faces to see how their eyes were placed, how their features were formed. And he discovered that a beautiful face is one where the features harmonize with each other. You see, someone can have a snub nose and prominent cheekbones, but if it all harmonizes then the face is beautiful."

"And have I got a snub nose? Is that what you're driving at?" asked Zoya laughing.

"No," answered Shura shyly, with unusual tenderness in his voice. "I mean that your face is harmonious. Everything matches: the forehead, the eyes, the mouth....."

ARKADI PETROVICH

Soon Zoya left for the sanatorium. It was not very far away at Sokolniki, and on my first free day I went to see her.

"Mama!" exclaimed Zoya dashing up to me, and almost before she had time to say hello. "Do you know who's resting here?"

"Yes?"

"Gaidar! The writer Gaidar! Here he comes."

A tall, broad-shouldered man with a frank pleasant face, which was very boyish somehow, was coming out of the park.

"Arkad. Petrovich!" Zoya called to him. "Here is my mama, come and meet her."

I shook his big strong hand and met his merry laughing eyes; and it immediately seemed to me that I had imagined the author of *The Blue Cup* and *Tinur and His Squad* to be just such a man.

"A very long time ago, when the children and I were reading your first books, Zoya was always asking what you were like, where you lived and could she see you," I said.

"Nothing much to see, is there? I live in Moscow, rest at Sokolniki, and she can see me all day long!" laughingly declared Gaidar

Then someone called him, he smiled at us and went away.

"Do you know how we got to know each other?" said Zoya leading me somewhere along a snowy pathway. "I was walking about in the park, and suddenly I looked and saw a great big man making a snowman. I didn't recognize him at first. What struck me was that he seemed to be in real earnest, really carried away by it, you know, like a small boy. He

would step back to admire it... I plucked up all my courage, went right up and said, 'I know you, you're Gaidar, the writer. I know all your books.' And he answered 'I know you too, and I know all your books: Kiselev's *Algebra*, Sokolov's *Physics* and Rybkin's *Trigonometry*!'

I laughed: Kiselev, Sokolov and Rybkin were the authors of Zoya's schoolbooks. Then Zoya said, "Let's walk on a bit, I'll show you what he's built: it's a whole fortress."

And indeed, it was like a fortress: in the depths of the park stood seven snow figures in a line. The first one was a real giant, the others got smaller and smaller, and the smallest of all was a snowman sitting behind a stall made of snow, and before him lay pine cones and birds' feathers.

"It's an enemy fortress," Zoya explained, laughing, "and Arkadi Petrovich bombards it with snowballs and we all help



Shura in 1939, a self-portrait

him. You can't keep away, it's such fun.... You know, Mama," concluded Zoya rather unexpectedly "I always thought that a man who writes such good books must be very good himself. And now I know that for a fact."

Arkadi Petrovich and Zoya became close friends. They went skating and skiing together, sang songs in the evening and talked about the books they had read. Zoya recited her favourite poems to him, and when we met again he told me, "Your girl reads Goethe wonderfully."

"And do you know what he said to me when he had heard me read Goethe?" exclaimed Zoya in some surprise. "He said, 'Come down to earth, down to earth!' Now what did he mean by that?"

Another time, not long before she left the sanatorium, Zoya told me, "You know, Mama, yesterday I said, 'Arkadi Petrovich, what is happiness? Please don't answer me as you answered Chuck and Geck in your book, by saying that each understands happiness in his own way. There is one big, common happiness for everyone, isn't there?' He got thoughtful and then said, 'There is, of course, such happiness. It's something real people live and die for. But it may take some time before it is established throughout the world.' Then I said, 'Oh, if it would only come!' And he said, 'It certainly will!'"

Some days later I came to fetch Zoya home. Gaidar saw us off to the gate. He shook hands to say good-bye and handed Zoya a book.

"It's by me. As a souvenir."

On its cover two boys were fighting: one thin, in a blue suit, the other chubby, in a grey one. They were Chuck and Geck. Overjoyed and confused, Zoya thanked him, and we passed through the gate. Gaidar waved his hand and stood looking after us. When we looked round for the last time we saw him strolling unhurriedly along the path towards the house.

Suddenly Zoya stopped, "Mama, perhaps he's written something to me!"

And hesitating, as if she could not make up her mind, she opened the book. On the title page were written in large clear letters the words we knew so well:

"What is happiness?—each understood that in his own way. But together people knew that they must live honestly, work a lot and love and cherish dearly this huge, happy land which is called the Land of Soviets."

"His answer to my question," said Zoya quietly.

A few days after her return from the sanatorium, Zoya went to school. She would not hear of staying for a second year.

CLASSMATES

"They were very glad to see me at school," said Zoya thoughtfully. "Very glad ... and very considerate. Just as if... as if I were made of glass and might break at any moment. And yet it was very nice to feel that they cared."

Once Zoya came back from school accompanied by a round-faced, rosy-cheeked girl, the very picture of health. It was Katya Andreyeva, one of my children's classmates.

"Hello, how are you?" she said smiling and shaking my hand.

"Katya volunteered to coach me in Maths," said Zoya.

"Can't Shura do that? Why bother Katya?"

"You see, Lyubov Timofeyevna," said Katya seriously, "Shura has no teaching ability. We've gone through a lot without Zoya, and it must all be explained to her very gradually and systematically. But Shura... I've heard him explaining things: one, two, three and that's that. And that won't do."

"Well, seeing he has no teaching ability....."

"Don't laugh, Mummy," Zoya put in. "Shura really can't explain things properly. But Katya here....."

Katya, I soon found, was indeed good at it. She did not hurry, she did not go on to the next step until she made sure that Zoya had taken in everything. I heard Zoya say to her once, "You are wasting so much time on me."

Arid Katya replied hotly:

"What are you saying! While I'm explaining it to you I learn it all so well myself that I don't have to go over it again at home. It comes to the same thing either way."

Zoya used to tire quickly. This did not escape Katya. She would push the book aside and say, "I feel rather played out. Let's talk about something else for a bit."

Sometimes they would go outside, take a walk, then come back and sit down again to their work.

"Are you planning to become a teacher?" said Shura jokingly one day.

"Yes, I am," answered Katya seriously.

Katya was not the only one who visited my children. Ira would drop in, some boys came: modest, shy Vanya Nosenkov, Petya Simonov, who loved nothing like a football game and an argument, gay energetic Oleg Balashov, a very handsome boy with a clear noble forehead. Occasionally Yura Braudo would look in, a tall lanky youth with a slightly ironical expression on his face, a pupil in the parallel class. And then our room would echo with noise and laughter. The girls would cast aside their textbooks, and the conversation would be about everything at once.

"D'you know, folks, Tarasova is not the only one who plays Anna Karenina, there's Elanskaya too," Ira would say. And at once a hot argument would start over which actress had a deeper, truer understanding of Tolstoy.

Once Oleg, who dreamed of becoming a flyer, came to us straight from the cinema, where he had just seen a film about Chkalov. He was full of it.

"There was a man!" he kept repeating. "Not only an extraordinary flyer, but a wonderful man. And with such a fine sense of humour. You know, when he flew across the North Pole to America in 1937, the reporters there asked him, 'Are you rich, Mr. Chkalov?' 'Yes,' he answers, 'very. I've got a hundred and seventy million.' The Americans just gasped. 'A hundred and seventy million! In rubles? Dollars?' And Chkalov comes back calm as you like, 'A hundred and seventy million people working for me, just as I work for them.' "

The children laughed.

Another time Vanya read a poem called *The General*, dedicated to the memory of Maté Zalka, who was killed in Spain. I remember that evening very well: Vanya, his face thoughtful, sat at the table, and the rest were grouped about, some on the bed, some on the window sill.

*It's cold tonight in the mountains.
Worn out by scouting for days,
He warms his cold and tired hands
Over the campfire's yellow blaze.*

*The coffeepot quietly simmers.
The tired soldiers sleep.
The Aragon laurel glimmers
And rustles its lazy leaf.*

*And suddenly it seems to the General
That the laurel's branches outspread
Are his native Hungarian lime trees,
Whispering over his head.*

Vanya's reading was simple, seemingly without pathos, but we could all hear a great heart beating passionately in the short restrained lines. And Vanya's gaze became unusually tense and firm, as if the boy himself were looking proudly and sorrowfully

into the gloom of the faraway Aragon night.

*His native land is far away,
But wherever he goes he feels
The Hungarian sky above him,
Hungarian earth 'neath his heels.*

*The Hungarian crimson banner
Is flaming in his hand,
And wherever he fights he's fighting
For his own Hungarian land.*

*And not long ago, in Moscow,
I heard from many who cried
That hit by a German grenade he was
In the battle of Weska, and died.*

*I refuse to believe that rumour,
And know: he is fighting in Spain,
And before he dies he'll be welcomed
In his own Budapest again.*

*While in the distant sky of Spain
The German vultures fly,
Do not believe the rumours
Of the General's death, for they lie.*

*He's alive. He's somewhere near Weska,
Where the tired soldiers sleep;
Above him the laurel glimmers
And rustles its lazy leaf.*

*And suddenly it seems to the General
That the laurel's branches outspread
Are his native Hungarian lime trees
Whispering over his head.*

Vanya stopped. No one moved or said a word. We were all swept, as if by a hot wind, by the emotion of those days when

every heart was swayed by the events in Spain, when the words "Madrid," "Guadalajara," "Weska," were near and familiar, and our hearts beat faster at every piece of news from those distant fronts.

"All, that was good!" Shura broke the silence.

And immediately questions poured in from all sides, "Who wrote it? where's it from?"

"It was written back in '37. I found it not long ago in a magazine. Good, isn't it?"

"Let us copy it out!" begged the children in chorus.

"Spain.... There's only been one blow as bad as that since then—the fall of Paris," Vanya remarked.

"Yes," went on Zoya, "I remember that summer day very well. The newspaper came, and there it was—Paris taken! And it was so terrible, so shameful!"

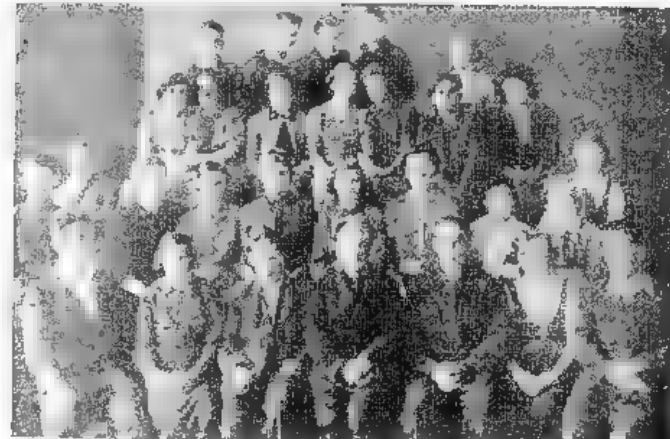
"I remember that day, too," said Vanya slowly. "You just couldn't believe that the fascists were walking about Paris. Paris under the Nazi jackboot! The Paris of the Communards!"

"I wish I had been there! I would have fought for Paris like our men did in Spain—to the last drop of blood!" said Petya Simonov quietly, and no one was surprised at his words.

"I dreamed of doing that too: first about Spain, then of fighting against the White Finns, and I missed everything...." said Shura, heaving a great sigh.

I listened to them and thought: what fine people are growing up.!

That winter I got to know Zoya and Shura's classmates well, and would often recognize in them the traits I knew so well in my own children. And I thought: that is how it should be. A family is not a closed box. Nor is school. Family, school and children live by what moves, worries and gladdens our Country; and everything going on around them educates our children.



Pupils of Grade 9-A, School No. 201. First on the left in the front row is Shura. Zoya is third from the right in the second row (in the striped knitted jumper)

Look, for example, how many creators of wonderful inventions in the past remained unknown! But now everyone who works hard and well and with talent becomes famous. And everyone who creates is surrounded with the respect and love of the people. Take this girl textile worker who has invented a new method of producing many times more beautiful strong cloth than before. Her example has inspired the textile workers all over the Soviet Union. Or this girl tractor driver—she works so cleverly and well that her name, unknown yesterday, is now loved and respected by all. Here is a new book for children, *Timur and His Squad*, a story about honour, about the noble feeling of friendship, about respect for human dignity. Here is a new film called *The Dawn of Paris*. It is about the French people, about the Polish patriot Dombrowski who fought for the freedom and happiness of his native land on the barricades of Paris. And the children drink in greedily everything good, honest, brave and kind of which these books and films are full, of which every day of our life is full.

And I see that although there is nothing dearer to my children and their friends than their Motherland, the whole wide world is also dear to them. For them France is not the country of Pétain and Laval, but the land of Stendhal and Balzac, the land of the Communards. The English are in their eyes the descendants of Shakespeare. The Americans are the fellow countrymen of Lincoln and Washington, Mark Twain and Jack London. And although they know that the Germans have brought ghastly, devastating war on the world, have seized France, crushed Czechoslovakia and Norway the real Germany is for them not that which produced Hitler and Goebbels, but the land of Beethoven, Goethe and Heine, the land where the great Marx was born. There has been fostered in them a deep and burning love for their own Country and respect for other peoples, for everything beautiful which has been created by all the nations of the world.

All that the children have seen around them, all that they have been taught in school has fostered in them genuine humanism and a passionate desire to build and not to destroy.

And I believed deeply in their future, that they would all be happy and that their life would be good and full of light.

GREEN IS THE COLOUR OF YOUTH

The days went by. Zoya had recovered her health and that was so important for us! She had grown quite strong again and did not tire so quickly. Gradually, thanks to the help of her comrades, she caught up with the class. Zoya, who was so sensitive to any kind or friendly word or act, valued their help highly

I remember her saying to me once, "You know that I've always loved school, but now"

She fell silent, but in her silence there was greater feeling than any words could express. After a while she added, "You know, I think I've made friends with Nina Smolyanova. She's

in the parallel class. She's a girl after my own heart. So serious and straight. One day we got talking in the library about books and about our friends. And we found we agreed about everything. I'll introduce her to you as soon as I can."

A few days later I met Vera Sergeyevna Novoselova in the street.

"Well," I asked, "how is my Zoya getting on?"

"She caught us up in my subject long ago. And no wonder: she's read so much.... We're very glad she has got better and stronger. I'm always seeing her with her chums. It seems to me she has made friends with Nina. They are rather alike, both of them are very straight and take everything seriously—people and studies."

I walked as far as the school with Vera Sergeyevna. On my way home I thought, "How well she knows the children!"

Spring stole in upon us—green and sudden.

I do not remember now what misdemeanour was committed by Grade 9-A, but the whole class came to the principal full of repentance and begged that they should not be punished but given work in the most difficult part of the schoolyard which was to be planted with trees.

Nikolai Vasilyevich agreed, and he certainly did not show any mercy. He really did give them the very hardest place—where the three storied annex to the school building had recently been built and waste rubbish was still lying about everywhere.

Zoya and Shura came home late that day, and completed with each other telling me how they had worked.

Armed with shovels and stretchers Grade 9-A were clearing and levelling the ground, carrying away the rubble and digging holes for the trees. Nikolai Kirikov, the principal, was working with them too—carrying stones and digging the earth. Suddenly a tall thin man came up to the children.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello!" they answered in chorus.

"Can you tell me where I can find the principal?"

"Here I am," replied Kirikov turning to the stranger and wiping his dirty hands.

"And there he stood," related Zoya laughing, "all dirty, with a shovel, just as if it were nothing out of the ordinary, as if it were a principal's job to plant trees with his pupils."

The thin man turned out to be a children's writer and a correspondent of *Pravda*. At first he was surprised to learn that the broad-shouldered navvy was indeed the principal of School No. 201; then he laughed and for the rest of the afternoon did not leave the site, although he had come to the school on quite a different errand. He looked over the young orchard, which the children had planted, the thick raspberry bushes and the roses. "Wonderful.....!" he said thoughtfully. "Suppose you were in the middle grades when you planted an apple tree in the school garden with your own hands. It grew up with you, you ran to have a look at it during the breaks, kept the soil dug and watered, and destroyed the pests. And now you are finishing school and your apple tree is already giving its first fruit.....Wonderful.....!"

"Wonderful!" repeated Zoya dreamily. "Now I'm in the ninth grade and I have planted a linden tree today. We'll grow up together... My linden is the third one—remember, Mummy. And the fourth tree is Katya Andreyeva's."

And a few days later the story of how the children of Grade 9 A had planted the schoolyard with trees appeared in *Pravda*. The story ended with these words:

"The graduation exams are almost over. Young people are leaving school, well grafted and developed, and impervious to frosts and winds under the open sky. The pupils of this school will go away to work, study, and serve in the Red Army, as indomitable and sure to win as the young green growth of the forest, sung by Nekrasov."

THE BALL

On June 21 there was a school leaving party for the tenth grade. Grade 9 A resolved to attend this party in full strength.

"In the first place, because they're our friends," said Shura. "There are some fine chaps there. Why, Vanya Belykh alone is worth a dozen!"

"And in the second place," put in Katya, "we'll see how it turns out with them, and next year we'll fix up something even better!"

They made ready for the ball as guests, as participants and as rivals who in a year's time meant to put on a dazzling ball such as no other school graduate had ever dreamt of.

Nikolai Ivanovich, the art teacher, helped decorate the school. He was blessed with something which was so highly valued and respected at School No. 201—deft, clever hands. He would always decorate the school in good taste, and for every occasion—the October Anniversary, the New Year and May Day—he would think up something new, something out of the ordinary. And the children took real delight in carrying out his instructions.

"This time he'll outdo himself!" Shura promised us.

The evening was light and warm. I came home late, about ten o'clock, and did not find the children in—they had already left for the ball. A little later I went outside again, sat down on the porch and stayed there for a long time, calm and not thinking about anything at all, just resting and delighting in the stillness and the fresh smell of the leaves. Then I got up and walked unhurriedly towards the school. I wanted to see, if only from a distance, how Nikolai Ivanovich had outdone himself, how the children were enjoying themselves.... I did not really know why I went, it was just for a walk—that was all.

"Do you know where School No. 201 is?" said a husky, woman's voice.

"Kirikov's?" responded someone in a deep kindly bass, before I had time to turn round. "Go straight on, then round that corner and you're there. Can you hear the music?"

I could hear the music too, and as soon as I turned the corner I saw the school, all bathed in light. The windows were wide open.

I went in, looked round and walked slowly up the staircase. Yes, Nikolai Ivanovich had done the best thing, the right thing: he had let summer burst into the school. There were flowers and greenery everywhere. In vases, tubs and pots, on the floor, on the walls and windows, in every corner and at every step—bouquets of roses and dark green garlands of fir, great bunches of lilac and the lacelike branches of birch, and still more flowers, heaps of them everywhere.....

I made towards the music, laughter and noise. When I reached the wide-open door of the hall I stopped, dazzled: there was so much light, so many young faces and sparkling eyes.... I recognized Vanya, the boy of whom Shura spoke with such fondness and respect: he was the chairman of the pupils' committee, a fine Komsomol member, an excellent scholar. The son of a plasterer and himself an expert at plastering, he had a good head and was very clever with his hands.... I noticed Volodya Yuryev, the son of Lydia Nikolayevna who had taught Zoya and Shura in the junior grades. This bright-eyed, high-browed boy had always surprised me by the earnest, solemn expression of his face, but now he was scattering confetti over the couples flying past, and laughing merrily, just like a small boy.....Then I sought out Shura. He was standing by the wall, and a fair-haired girl was inviting him to waltz with her. I saw my son smile shyly and shake his head.

And there was Zoya. She was wearing a red frock with black spots—the one she had bought with the money Shura had given her as a present. The dress became her very well. When Shura saw it for the first time he had remarked with pleasure, "It suits you very, very much."

Zoya was chatting with a tall dark youth, whose name I did not know. Her smiling eyes were bright, her cheeks aglow.

The waltz ended, and the couples broke up. But at once someone gave a merry shout, "Everyone stand round in a circle!"

And again there was a flutter of the blue, pink and white frocks of the girls, glimpses of laughing faces.

An explosion of merry laughter reached my ears as I was leaving the school. I walked slowly along the street, drinking in the cool air of the night. My thoughts went back to the day when I first took little Zoya and Shura to school. "How they have grown! If only their father could see them," I thought.

The summer nights are short in Moscow, and their stillness is not unbroken. Belated footsteps ring along the pavement, a car appears from nowhere and swishes past, the crystal chimes of the Kremlin bells echo afar over the sleeping city.

But that June night could hardly be called still. Voices and bursts of laughter and the light patter of rapid footsteps would come unexpectedly out of the darkness, suddenly a song would strike up somewhere. People awakened at this unaccustomed hour would peer out of the windows in surprise, and their faces would light up with a smile. No one asked why there were so many merry young people about in the streets that night, why boys and girls, arms linked in groups of ten or fifteen at a time, marched right down the centre of the street, why they had such happy faces and just could not contain their songs and laughter. Everyone knew that it was young Moscow celebrating graduation day.

I woke up when dawn was just breaking in at the window. The night was so short. It was the 22nd of June.

Shura was standing by his bed. It must have been his cautious, muffled footsteps that had awakened me.

"Where's Zoya?" I asked.

"She's gone off for a walk with Ira."

"Was it a good party, Shura?"

"Tops! We went away early and left the leavers alone with the teachers. Out of politeness, you know, so as not to spoil their leave-taking and all that."

Shura got into bed and we were silent for a while. Suddenly voices drifted in through the open window.

"Zoya and Ira!" said Shura in a whisper.

The girls had stopped right under the window and were discussing something heatedly.

"... it's when you are the happiest person in the world," Ira's voice floated up to us. •

"That's so. But I don't understand how you can love a man if you don't respect him," retorted Zoya.

"But how can you talk like that!" exclaimed Ira, appalled. "And after reading so many books!"

"That's just why I say: if I can't respect a man I can't love him."

"But that's not what books say about love. In books love is happiness... it's quite a special feeling....."

"Yes, of course. But....."

The voices died away

"She's gone to see Ira home," said Shura softly. And he added anxiously, like an elder brother, "It will be hard for her in life. She treats everything somehow from a special angle."

"Never mind," I said. "She's too young yet. Everything will be all right, Shura."

Zoya's careful footfalls sounded on the staircase. She softly opened the door ajar.

"Are you asleep?" she asked softly.

We did not answer. Zoya stole quietly over to the window and stood there for a long time, looking at the dawn-washed sky.

THE TWENTY-SECOND OF JUNE

How every minute of that day has remained fixed in my memory!

On Sunday, June 22, I was to supervise the final examinations at a military school. It was a clear sunny morning when I hurried out to catch the tram. Zoya was seeing me off. She walked alongside, quite a grown-up girl, tall and slender, her cheeks a tender pink. And she had a fine sparkling smile. She was smiling at the sun, the freshness all round, the scent of the lime tree in full bloom.

I stepped into the tram. Zoya waved to me, stood for a second at the tram stop, then turned back home.

It was almost an hour's run to the military school. I used to read in the tram, but it was such a fine morning that I went out onto the platform so as to breathe in more of the soft summer breeze. Heedless of all passenger rules it burst into the moving tram and ruffled the hair of the cheerful boys and girls crowding together on the platform. My fellow travellers kept changing. At the Timiryazev Academy the students got off and made for their various departments: the rush of the exams knows no Sundays. By the statue of Timiryazev I caught a glimpse of boys and girls sitting in groups on the benches amid the colourful flower beds. Preparing for the exams, most likely. And perhaps, among them there are a few lucky ones who have already passed theirs. At the next stop both the platform and the car were filled with school children in their best clothes and red ties. A very young and stern woman teacher with spectacles was seeing that the children did not make too much noise, did not stand on the steps, did not poke their heads out of the windows.

"Maria Vasilyevna," a broad-shouldered young lad implored her, "what's the idea: keep quiet in class and don't talk here? But we're on holiday now!"

The teacher did not deign to reply. Instead she gave the lad a look which made him lower his eyes with a sigh and subside.

For a little while after that a solemn hush reigned in the car. Then a girl with flaming-red hair, mischievous eyes and merry freckles all over her face elbowed her friend, whispered something in her ear, and the next moment they were all whispering and giggling, and the car buzzed and hummed from end to end like a beehive.

I got off the tram. There was half an hour to go before the exams were due to begin, and I walked slowly down the broad street, inspecting the windows of the bookshops. I must tell Shura to come here and buy the textbooks and the geographical maps for the tenth grade. Let us be ready in advance for this, the last and decisive school year. And here was the art show which we were planning to visit.

I reached the school and went up to the second floor. It was not like examination time at all, so empty and deserted did everything look. In the teachers' room I met the head.

"The exams have been called off for today, Lyubov Timofeyevna," he said. "The students have not turned up. We do not know the reason yet."

Still not suspecting anything I felt something grow cold inside me. My students were soldiers, highly disciplined people. What could have delayed them on the day of their exams? What had happened? No one knew yet.

It seemed to have got stuffy when I went out into the street again, and everyone seemed to wear a disturbed, tense expression on his face. What had become of the morning's freshness, the carefree noisy gaiety of a Moscow holiday crowd? Everyone appeared to be waiting for something, and the expectation was difficult to bear, just as it is before a storm.

The trams rumbled past, overflowing. I walked nearly all the way back. Near home I got on a tram and thus missed hearing Comrade Molotov's speech. But the first word which

greeted me at home was the one which shattered the stormy stuffiness of that memorable morning for all of us.

"War, Mummy! War!" shouted the children rushing towards me. They both started speaking at once, "It's war! Germany has attacked us! Without a declaration of war! They just crossed the border and opened fire!"

Zoya's face was angry and she spoke fiercely, giving free rein to her wrath. Shura was doing his best to appear calm and collected.

"This was to be expected," he said thoughtfully, "We knew what fascist Germany was all along."

There was a short silence.

"Yes, life will be quite different now," said Zoya between her teeth, as if she were talking to herself.

Shura swung round at her, "Don't tell me *you* are thinking of going to the front?"

"I mean to do just that," Zoya retorted almost angrily and, as before, not addressing anyone in particular. Then, abruptly, she spun round and left the room.

We knew that the war would bring death to millions of people, that it meant destruction, misery and grief. But on that now far-off day we had no clear picture of its full scope of horrors. We knew nothing of air raids, we did not know what a trench or an air-raid shelter was—soon we were to make them ourselves. We had not yet heard the screeching and exploding of bombs. We did not know that a blast could smash windowpanes to smithereens and make locked doors fly off their hinges. We knew nothing of evacuation and trains crowded with children, trains which the enemy would calmly and methodically strafe. We had not yet heard of villages burnt to the ground and towns reduced to rubble. We had no knowledge of gallows, inquisitions and tortures, the terrible ditches and pits where thousands would be done to death—the infirm and

the very old, women and babes in their mothers' arms. We knew nothing of the furnaces where thousands, nay, millions of people would be burnt. We did not know about the death vans, about nets made of human hair, about book covers made of human skin. There was much that we still did not know. We had grown used to respecting human dignity, to loving children and regarding them as our future. We still did not know that beasts, no different in appearance from men, could throw a suckling child into the fire. We did not know how long this war would last.....

Yes, there was much that we still did not know.

WAR DAYS

The first to leave for the front from our house was Yura Isayev. I witnessed his departure. He was walking along with his wife, and a little behind, wiping her eyes, now with her kerchief, now with her apron, went his mother. When he had gone a few steps Yura looked round. There must have been someone in every flat standing at the open windows watching him go, just as we did. And Yura's heart must have ached at the sight of the little two-storied house amid the thick green bushes, and the people who lived in it—so near and dear.....He saw Zoya and me at the window, smiled and waved his cap.

"Good luck!" he shouted.

"Good luck to you!" answered Zoya.

Yura kept looking back, as if he wanted to memorize everything he was leaving behind, every line of the house, as in the face of a friend—the open windows, the bushes all round.....

It was not long before Sergei Nikoln was called up. He left the house alone: his wife was working at her factory and could not see him off. When he had gone a little way Sergei, like Yura, looked round at the house. They were different people and outwardly quite unlike each other, but at this moment of

farewell their eyes seemed just the same: both embraced with a glance, full of love and anxiety, as much as they could, to carry away with them

Life changed completely. It grew stern and troubled. A great change came over Moscow. The windows were plastered with paper strips—a plain crisscross was the prevailing pattern. The shopwindows were shuttered up with plywood and barricaded with sandbags. The houses seemed to be glowering at you, gloomy and guarded.

We started digging a trench in the yard of our house. People took boards out of their sheds to line its walls. One of the neighbours insisted louder than anybody else that nothing should be spared for the common cause, but for some reason forgot to open his own shed. Instead, he suddenly pounced upon a couple of children playing in the yard (their father was at the front and their mother at work), and demanded that they bring some boards immediately. Zoya strode up to him and said calmly and distinctly, "Listen to this: you open your shed now and give us some boards. And while we're working, the mother of these children will come back from work and also do everything that's needed. It's easy to shout at children."

In the very first days of the war my nephew Slava called on us to say good-bye. He was in air-force uniform, with wings on his sleeve.

"I'm off to the front!" he informed us. His face was so full of joy he might have been going to a picnic. "Remember me kindly!"

We embraced each other hard, and he left after spending scarcely half an hour with us

"What a pity they don't take girls in the Army!" said Zoya as she watched him go. And there was so much bitterness and growing resolve in these words that even Shura decided not to indulge in his usual practice of cracking a joke or starting an argument on the subject.

We never went to bed without listening to the Soviet Information Bureau's communiques. They were not cheerful dispatches in those first weeks. Zoya listened to them with knitted brows and clenched teeth, and would often abruptly leave us at the loud-speaker without saying a word. But once she burst out, "What sacred soil they are trampling!"

That was the first and only cry of pain which I heard from Zoya during all that time.

THE PARTING

Towards evening of July 1 there was a knock at our door.

"Can I speak to Shura?" asked a voice behind it.

Zoya got up from the table and opened the door ajar.

"Petya Simonov?" she exclaimed in surprise. "What do you want Shura for?"

"We need him," answered Petya mysteriously.

At that moment Shura himself, who had been out the room, appeared, nodded to his comrade, and without a word went outside with him. We looked out of the window. There were several young lads waiting below, all of them classmates and close friends. There was a hurried discussion, carried on in low tones, and off they all went in a bunch.

"To the school," said Zoya thoughtfully to herself. "What's their secret, I wonder?"

Shura returned late that evening. He looked as grave and troubled as Petya earlier in the day.

"What's happened?" asked Zoya. "Why such secrecy? What did they want you for?"

"I'm not free to explain," Shura replied with decision.

Zoya shrugged her shoulders.

The next morning she ran off to the school almost before it was light, and came back greatly perturbed.

"The boys are leaving," she said to me. "They won't say where or what for. They aren't taking us girls. How I pleaded with them to take me! After all, I can shoot. And I'm strong. It was no use. They said that only the boys could go."

By Zoya's face and eyes I saw how much fervour she had put into those vain pleadings.

Shura came back late and remarked in a casual tone, as if it were nothing out of the ordinary, "Pack me a change of underclothes, Mum. And food for the journey. Only I don't need much."

Whether he knew or not where they were being sent—that we could not get out of him.

"If I start off by chattering my head off, what sort of a soldier will I make?" he demanded.

Zoya turned away in silence.

Packing did not take long. Zoya bought Shura rusks, sweets and sausage for the road. I got together his linen and tied everything in a small bundle. And in the afternoon we went to see Shura off.

In Timiryazev Park there was already a crowd of boys from various schools. At first they were all mixed up, then they gradually broke up into groups according to their schools. Mothers and sisters were standing on one side with bundles, suitcases and rucksacks, which they held by the straps just like handbags. Those leaving—nearly all of them were tall and broad-shouldered, but had merry boyish faces—pretended that it was the usual thing for them to be leaving their homes and families. Some had managed to find time for a bathe in the pond, others were eating ice cream, and joking. But without meaning to, they kept glancing at the clock more and more often. Those whose mothers or sisters had not yet left were looking rather uncomfortable: there they were, going off on an important mission—and standing with their mothers just as if they were small kids! Knowing that our presence would

embarrass Shura. Zoya and I went off to one side and sat down on a bench in the shade.

At about four o'clock several empty tramcars came up on the circuit. Hurriedly the boys said good-bye to their folks and began to embark noisily. Those who were leaving their mothers in tears had sad gloomy faces. I did not want to spoil the last minutes we were together, and I did not cry—I just hugged Shura and pressed his hand hard. Although he tried to hide his feelings, I could see how deeply moved he was.

"Don't wait for us to start off, go home! Look after Mama, Zoya!" With these words Shura jumped into the car, waved to us through the window and made signs to us, as much as to say, "Don't wait, go home!"

But we had not the heart to leave while Shura was still there. From a distance we saw the trams shudder and then, ringing and rumbling, move off down the road. And we did not stir until the last tram was out of sight.

The park which had just been so crowded and noisy at once grew empty and quiet. Beneath the giant oaks stood the benches, but there was no one sitting on them. The slightly ruffled pond stretched out broad and cool, but there was no one bathing in it. No sound of voices or laughter or rapid footfalls. It was quiet. Too quiet.

We walked slowly down a lane. Few sunrays managed to ooze through the dense foliage overhead. Each of her own accord, we went up to a bench right by the pool and sat down.

"How lovely!" said Zoya suddenly. "You know, Shura often used to come here to draw. He drew that little bridge over there."

She was addressing me and seemed at the same time to be talking to herself—quietly, slowly, meditatively.

"It's a wide pool, but Shura used to swim across it many times," she recalled aloud. "You know what happened once? A long time ago that was, Shura was only twelve then. As usual,

he began to bathe in the spring before anybody else. The water was cold and suddenly he got the cramp in his leg, and it was a long way to the bank. He swam using only one leg, the other had gone quite numb. And he only just managed it. He begged me so much not to tell you about it. I did not tell you then. Now I can."

"And next day, to be sure, he went in again?" I asked.

"Of course. He used to swim morning and evening, rain or shine, almost until it was winter. And over there by the bushes there's always a hole in the ice in winter. We used to catch fish there, do you remember? At first we used a tin, and afterwards a net. Remember how we treated you to fried fish?"

"Good girl!" I said in way of answer, quietly stroking her sunburnt hand.

And suddenly beneath my palm her strong lean fingers doubled up into a fist.

"Good? What good am I?" Zoya sprang to her feet, and I realized what had been gnawing at her all this time. "What good am I if I have stayed behind? The boys have gone perhaps to fight. How can I do nothing now?!"

"MY WORDS ARE ADDRESSED TO YOU, DEAR FRIENDS!"

"Mummy, quick, wake up!"

I opened my eyes. Zoya was standing before me, barefoot, with a towel over her shoulder.

"No, no, nothing's wrong," she said hurriedly, in answer to my frightened glance. "Comrade Stalin is going to speak. On the radio. Hush...!"

A slight rustle in the loud-speaker. Silence. Then suddenly...

"Comrades! Citizens!" we heard. "Brothers and sisters! Men of our Army and Navy! My words are addressed to you, dear friends.....!"

We held our breath and forgot everything else. Zoya stood tense and rigid, her fists clenched, staring fixedly at the loud-speaker, as if beyond the disk she could see him who was speaking these words, full of restrained grief, love and faith, full of passionate strength and wrath:

"..... our country has come to death grips with its bitterest and most cunning enemy—German fascism... The enemy is cruel and implacable....."

Our leader spoke of the enemy's aims, of how German fascism wished to seize our lands, the fruits of our labour, to restore the rule of the landlords, to enslave and Germanize the free peoples of the Soviet Union.

"... Thus the issue is one of life and death for the Soviet State," he said, "of life and death for the peoples of the U.S.S.R., of whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall be free or fall into slavery. The Soviet people must realize this... All our work must be immediately reorganized on a war footing, everything must be subordinated to the interests of the front... The Red Army, the Red Navy and all citizens of the Soviet Union must defend every inch of Soviet soil, must fight to the last drop of blood for our towns and villages ..."

Our leader said that partisan groups should be formed in the enemy-occupied districts, and our land must burn and explode under the feet of the enemy.

His calm quiet voice went straight to our hearts. It rang with such faith in all of us, in the whole people and in every Soviet citizen! He told us that this was not an ordinary war between two armies. He reminded us that we must not only destroy the danger threatening our country, but also help all the peoples of Europe groaning under the yoke of German fascism.

"... All forces of the people for routing the enemy! Forward to victory!"

The radio was silent. And still we did not move, did not utter a word, as if afraid to spill even a drop of the immense feeling with which our hearts overflowed at that moment.

The man whom we had grown used to believe as ourselves, as our conscience, had just spoken to us. Teacher, Leader and Friend. We had relied on him always and in all things. We knew that he had just said all that was most important, and that he had appealed directly to each one of us. He had helped us to understand completely and feel how great was the danger threatening our Motherland, and how to deal with it. He had helped us to feel our strength in a new way—to feel the might of a freedom-loving and united people.

"I wonder if Shura heard h.m....." I said.

"Everyone heard him, all over the country," said Zoya with certainty. And almost in a whisper and with deep emotion she repeated, "My words are addressed to you, dear friends!"

THE FIRST BOMBS

Zoya and I are sitting at the table. Before us lies a green coarse cloth. We are making kitbags out of it for the front. And we are also making soldiers' collar straps. It may be simple work, it may not be such a very important task, but it is for the front. These straps are for a soldier, for someone who is defending us from the enemy. The kitbag is also for a soldier. He will put his things in it, the kitbag will come in handy, it will be of use on the march.....

We work in silence, almost without a break. Occasionally I put down my sewing and straighten my back—it hurts me a little. And I look at Zoya. Her narrow sunburnt hands are deft and tireless. They just eat up the work. If the knowledge that she is doing her bit has not completely freed her from tormenting thoughts, it has at least helped her to gain some kind of internal balance. Even outwardly she has changed: her eyes are not so

dark and gloomy now, and sometimes a smile plays about her lips.

One day when we were sitting over our sewing the door opened and in came Shura. He entered with an air of emphasized calm, as if he had just come home from school. It was only after he had thrown his rucksack off his shoulders, that he said hello.

We knew already that he had been at the labour front. But even now that he was back, just as in parting, he did not tell us a thing.

"What matters is that I am with you again," he said with finality when we tried to ask him questions.

"And there's nothing to talk about really. We just did a lot of work, that's all." And screwing up his eyes cunningly, he added, "I've come back to celebrate my birthday at home. I hope you haven't forgotten July 27? After all, I'll be sixteen."

And when he had washed and was sitting at the table, he said to Zoya, "I know what you and I can do. Let's go to the Borets Works as turner's apprentices. What about it?"

Zoya put down her sewing and looked at her brother. Then taking up her work again she said, "Good! That will be a real job."

Shura came back on July 22, and that evening enemy aircraft broke through to Moscow for the first time. For the first time German bombs fell on the capital. Shura kept quite cool, acted confidently, and made sure that all the women and children went down into the shelter. "Only I just can't get my own women to go there," he complained. He himself was in the street all through the air raid. Zoya did not leave his side for a moment.

We had no sleep that night. And towards morning the news went round our house that a bomb had hit the school.

"Number 201?" shouted Zoya and Shura in one voice.

Before I could say a word they jumped up and made for the school. I too could not stay at home. We walked fast, in silence. I could hardly keep up with the children. Only when we caught sight of the school building did we breathe a sigh of relief. It stood whole and undamaged.

But as we came closer we saw that the bomb had fallen across the street, and the blast had blown out all the windows: there was glass all over the place... It glistened coldly everywhere and crunched under our feet. A kind of helplessness breathed from this huge building: it was just as if a big strong man had suddenly been blinded. Involuntarily, we stopped; then walked up the steps and along the corridors which I had last seen a month ago, on the evening of the school leaving ball. Then they had echoed with music and laughter; youth and gaiety had reigned everywhere. Now the doors were torn off their hinges, underfoot there was glass and plaster ...

We met a few others from the senior grades, and Shura ran off with them—to the cellar, I think. Mechanically I followed Zoya to the door of the library. Empty shelves were ranged along the walls like a huge vicious paw the blast had swept the books off and flung them wildly over the floor and tables. Books were lying about everywhere. And the chaos one could pick out the light-yellow binding of the *Academia* edition of Pushkin, the blue covers of Chekhov's Collected Works... I almost trod on a crumpled volume of Turgenev, bent down to pick it up and noticed beside me, beneath a layer of plaster and dust, a volume of Schiller. And looking at me from the open pages of a huge book—in surprise, it seemed—was a portrait of Don Quixote.

On the floor amid the wreckage sat an elderly woman. She was weeping bitterly. Zoya bent down to her.

"Get up, Maria Grigoryevna, don't cry!" she said, her lips pale.

More than once, coming home with a new interesting book, Zoya had told me about the school librarian. This woman loved

and knew books, she had devoted all her life to books. And now she was sitting on the floor among the scattered, torn, crumpled volumes, the books she used to take in her hands so carefully and lovingly.

"Let's pick them up and put everything in order," repeated Zoya insistently, helping Maria Grigoryevna to her feet.

I bent down again and began to pick up the books.

"Mama, look!" I heard suddenly.

I turned my head in surprise, and the tearful Maria Grigoryevna, stepping carefully through the books, also came up to us. Zoya's voice had sounded so strange, almost triumphant. She held out an open volume of Pushkin.

"Look!" said Zoya, still with the same strange note of joy and triumph in her voice.

With a sharp wave of her hand she brushed the dust off the lines, and I read:

*Thou sacred sun burn on!
just as you lamp doth flicker and fade
In the limpid light of down,
Thus is wisdom false decayed
If in the sun of thought 'tis tried.
All hail the sun, all darkness hide!*

"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR THE FRONT?"

On the 27th of July, his sixteenth birthday, Shura announced, "Well, Mum, now you are the mother of two turners!"

Now the children would get up almost before daybreak and come back from work late, but they never complained of being tired. Coming home from the night shift the children did not go to bed at once. When I came home I would find them asleep and the room clean and tidy.

The air raids on Moscow continued. In the evenings we would hear the calm voice of the announcer, "Attention, air-raid warning!"

The words were followed by the screeching of sirens and the threatening roar of locomotive whistles.

Not once did Zoya and Shura go to the shelter. Their coevals—Gleb Ermoshkin, Vanya Skorodumov and Vanya Serov, all three of them fine sturdy young lads, would come round, and they would all go out to keep watch round the house or in the attic. Children and grownups alike were absorbed by the new and terrible events which had entered their lives, and could think of nothing else.

In the autumn the pupils of the senior grades, Zoya among them, went off to the labour front: the potatoes on a state farm had to be brought in quickly, to save the crop from the frosts.

The frosts had already begun, there had already been snowfalls, and I was worried about Zoya's health. But she was overjoyed at leaving. She took with her only a change of linen, clean notebooks and a few books.

A few days later I received a letter from her, then another.

"We are helping to bring in the harvest. The daily quota is 100 kilograms. On October 2 I gathered 80. That's not much. I will definitely bring it up to 100.

"How are you? I think of you all the time and am worried. I am very homesick, but now I shall soon be back—as soon as we have brought in the potatoes.

"Mummy, forgive me, the work is very dirty and not particularly easy. I have torn my galoshes. But please don't worry, I'll come back safe and sound.

"I keep on remembering you and thinking: no, I am not at all like you. I have not got your patience! Love. Zoya "

I thought for a long time over this letter, and especially over the last lines. What lay behind them? Why had Zoya suddenly

"Together again," said Shura, as if he had overheard my thoughts

The whole family of us sat at the table, drinking tea, and Zoya told us about the state farm. Without waiting for me to ask about the strange lines in her letter she told us this:

"It was hard work: rain, mud, your galoshes stuck, feet were sore. I looked up and saw that three of the boys were working faster than me. They were going on quickly while I kept digging for a long time in one place. Then I decided to find out why it was so. I broke away and began to work on a strip of my own. They took offence and called me an individualist. And I replied, 'Perhaps I am an individualist, but you don't work fair.' You see what was happening: they were working quickly because they were gathering the potatoes only from the top, just for the sake of speed, and were leaving a lot in the earth. But the ones lying deep are the best, the biggest. And I was digging deeply, so as really to dig everything out. That's why I told them they were not working fairly. Then they said to me, 'Why didn't you say so at once, why did you break away?' I answered, 'I wanted to test myself.' And they said, 'You ought to have trusted us more and said so at once.' And Nina said, 'You acted wrongly.' Anyhow, there was a lot of noise and argument." Zoya shook her head in embarrassment and ended quietly, "You know, Mama, I understood then that although I was right I had been lacking in tact. I should have taken it out with the boys first, explained things to them. Perhaps I shouldn't have had to break away then."

Shura gave me a knowing look, and in his glance I read, "I told you so!"

Moscow was becoming more and more tense and watchful with each day. Houses took cover behind camouflage. Orderly detachments of troops marched through the streets. Their faces were worth looking at: tightly pressed lips, a straight steady glance from under knitted brows. Unwavering persistence and a roused wrathful will were plainly written on those faces.

Ambulances raced along the streets, tanks went rumbling by.

In the pitch darkness of the evenings, unrelieved either by the light from a window or from a street lamp, or the swift beam of a car's headlights, one had to feel one's way, carefully and at the same time hurriedly. And with the same hurried cautious steps other people went past, whose faces you could not see. And then air-raid warnings, fire-watching in the yard, the sky torn by ack-ack and sliced by the beams of searchlights and lighted by the purple glow of a distant fire.

It was no easy time: the enemy was closing in on Moscow.

One day Zoya and I were walking along the street, and on the wall of a house we noticed a big placard from which the determined face of a soldier looked at us severely. The keen piercing eyes were looking straight at us, the words printed underneath rang in our ears as if they had been spoken aloud in an urgent voice, "What have you done for the front?"

Zoya turned away.

"I can't pass that placard calmly," she said bitterly.

"But you are still young, and you have been to the labour front—that's also work for the country, for the Army."

"Not enough," answered Zoya doggedly.

For some minutes we walked along in silence, and suddenly Zoya said in quite a different voice, cheerfully and with an air of finality, "I am lucky. Everything I want comes true."

"What are you thinking about?" I wanted to ask, and did not, but my heart was heavy with foreboding.

FAREWELL, ZOYA

"Mummy," said Zoya, "I've made up my mind: I'm going to take a nursing course."

"And what about the plant?"

"They'll let me go. It's for the front, isn't it?"

Within two days she had obtained all the necessary papers. She was now lively, joyful, as she always was when she clearly saw her way before her.

And meanwhile she and I kept sewing kitbags, mittens and helmets. During the air raids she continued to keep watch on the roof or in the attic, and envied Shura who had already put out several incendiary bombs at the plant.

The day before Zoya was to go to her course for the first time she left the house early, and did not come back till late in the evening. Shura and I had dinner without her.

My son was working on the night shift those days, and now as he got ready to leave he was telling me something, but I hardly listened. I could not free myself from the fearful anxiety which had suddenly taken hold of me.

"Mum, but you aren't listening!" said Shura reproachfully.

"I'm sorry, Shura. It's because I can't understand where Zoya has got to."

He left, I made sure that the windows were properly blacked out, sat down at the table and, unable to start doing anything, again began to wait.

Zoya came in excited, her cheeks burning. She came up and hugged me and said, looking me straight in the eyes, "Mama, it's a big secret. I am to go into the enemy's rear. Don't tell anyone, not even Shura. Say that I have gone away to see Grandad in country."

I fought my tears in silence. But I had to say something. Zoya was looking into my face with shining, joyful, expectant eyes.

"But will you have the strength for that?" I said at last. "You aren't a boy, you know."

She stepped back to the bookstand, and from there continued to look at me with keen steady eyes.

"Why must it be you?" I burst out in spite of myself. "Now if they had called you up....."

Zoya came up to me again and took my hands in hers.

"Listen, Mama, I'm certain that if you were well you would do the same as I. I cannot stay here. I can't!" she repeated. Then she added quietly, "You told me yourself that one must be honest and brave in life. What else could I do now when the enemy is so close! If they came here I could not live.....You know me. There is no other way for me."

I was about to say something in reply, but she began speaking again, in a simple matter-of-fact way.

"I'm leaving in two days. Please, get me a Red Army map case and one of our kitbags. And also a change of linen, a towel, soap, toothbrush, pencil and paper. That's all. I can manage the rest myself."

Then she went to bed, and I was left sitting at the table, knowing that I could neither sleep nor read. She could not go back on it all now—I could see that. But what would come of it all? She was only a young girl....

I had never had to search for words when talking to my children, we had always understood each other at once. But now I felt as if I were up against a wall which I could not climb. Oh, if only Anatoly Petrovich were alive.....!

But no, anything I said would be in vain. And no one—neither I nor her father, had he been alive,—could keep Zoya back.

The next day, for the first time in a whole week, Shura worked on the morning shift. He came back tired and sad, and ate somehow without appetite.

"Has Zoya really made up her mind to go to Aspen Woods?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered shortly.

"Well," said Shura thoughtfully, "it's good she's going away. Moscow's no place for girls of her age now.... .."

His voice sounded uncertain.

"Perhaps you will go, too," he added after a pause. "You will find it quieter there."

I shook my head silently. Shura sighed, got up from the table and suddenly said, "I think I'll go to bed. I'm rather tired today."

I covered the lamp with a sheet of newsprint. Shura lay for some time in silence, with his eyes open, and seemed to be thinking hard about something. Then he turned over to the wall and soon fell asleep.

* * *

Zoya came back late.

"I knew you would be awake," she said quietly, and added in a whisper, "I am leaving tomorrow." As if wishing to soften the force of the blow, she stroked my hand.

She lost no time in seeing to the things which she would have to take with her, and packed them away neatly in her kitbag. I helped her in silence. There was something so ordinary and simple about this packing, about the way one tried to put away each item so that it would take less room and seized upon a free space to push in a cake of soap or a spare pair of woollen socks. Yet these were our last minutes together. Were we parting for long? What dangers, what hardships, formidable even for a man, for a soldier, awaited my Zoya? I could not speak, I knew that I had no right to cry, but all the time there was a bitter lump growing in my throat.

"There we are," said Zoya. "That seems to be all."

Then she opened her drawer, took out her diary and wanted to put that into her kitbag too.

"I shouldn't," I said with an effort.

"I suppose you're right."

And before I could stop her Zoya had walked to the stove and thrown the notebook into the fire. Then she sat down there on the low bench and said in a small voice, like a child, "Come and sit with me."

I sat down beside her, and as in years gone by we sat staring at the merrily dancing flames. But then I had been telling some story, and Zoya and Shura, flushed with the heat, had been listening. Now, I was silent. I knew that I had not the strength to utter a word.

Zoya turned round, glanced over to where Shura was sleeping, then gently took my hands in hers and began so softly that I could hardly hear, "I will tell you how it happened.... Only you mustn't tell anyone, not even Shura. I sent in an application to the District Committee of the Komsomol saying that I wanted to go to the front. Do you know how many such applications they received there? Thousands! When I called for the answer they told me, 'Go to the Moscow Committee of the Komsomol, to the Secretary.'

"I went there. As soon as I opened the door the Secretary looked at me very, very keenly. Then we talked, and he kept looking at my hands. At first I kept twisting a button, but then I put my hands on my knees and did not move them any more, so that he would not think I was nervous. At first he asked me about my biography: Where was I from? who were my parents? where had I travelled? what districts did I know? what languages? I said, 'German.' Then about my legs, heart, nerves. Then he began to ask me questions about topography. He asked me what an azimuth was, how to find your way with its help, how to take your bearings by the stars. I answered everything. Then, 'Do you know the rifle?' 'I do.' 'Have you had any target practice?' 'Yes.' 'Can you swim?' 'Yes.' 'And you aren't afraid of high diving?' 'No, I am not afraid.' 'And you are not afraid to

jump from the parachute tower?' 'I am not.' 'And have you a strong will?' I answered that my nerves were strong and I was patient. 'Well,' he said, 'there's a war on, people are needed... Suppose we send you to the front?' 'Please do!' 'But,' he said, 'it isn't the same as sitting in the office, talking..... By the way, where do you stay during the air raids?' 'On the roof. I'm not afraid of the warnings. And I'm not afraid of the bombings. In fact, I'm not afraid of anything.' Then he said, 'All right, go into the corridor and sit there. I'll just have a talk with one more comrade, and then we'll go to Tushino to make some trial jumps from an airplane.'

"I went into the corridor. I walked about thinking about that jump—I must not funk it. Then he calls me in again, 'Ready?' 'Ready.' And then he began to frighten me." Zoya pressed my hand tighter. "He said that the conditions would be hard.... And anything might happen.... Then he said, 'Well, go and think it over. Come back in two days' time.' I realized then that he had mentioned parachute jumping just to test me.

"I came back in two days, and he said, 'We have decided not to take you.' I almost burst out crying, and suddenly began to shout, 'What do you mean, not take me? Why not?'

"Then he smiled and said, 'Sit down. You'll go into the rear of the enemy.' I realized that that had also been a test. You see, I'm sure that if he had noticed me give an involuntary sigh of relief or something like that, he would not have taken me for anything. And that was all. My first exam was over....."

The wood crackled cheerfully in the stove. The light of the flames glowed softly on Zoya's face. There was no other light in the room. We sat for long time looking into the fire in silence.

"Pity Uncle Sergei is not in Moscow," Said Zoya thoughtfully at length. "He would be a support to you at such a difficult time as this, if only with his advice....."

Then Zoya closed the stove, made her bed and lay down. A little later I went to bed too, but I could not go to sleep. I thought of how long it would be after tonight before Zoya would sleep again at home, in her own bed. And was she asleep.. ..? I went up to her softly. She stirred at once.

"Why aren't you asleep?" she asked, and I could hear by her voice that she was smiling.

"I got up to look at the clock so as not to oversleep," I answered. "You go to sleep."

I lay down again, but sleep would not come. I wanted to go up to her again and ask if she had reconsidered. Perhaps it would be better if we were all evacuated, as had often been suggested to me. Something seemed to be suffocating me. I had to fight for breath.... It was the last night. The last chance I should have of keeping her. Then it would be too late.... And again I got up. In the dim light of early dawn I looked at Zoya as she slept, at her calm face, at her stubborn, tightly pressed lips and with a sinking sense of finality I understood that she would never change her mind.

Shura rose early to go to the plant.

"Good-bye Shura," said Zoya when he was already in his hat and coat

He shook her hand.

"Give Grandad and Grandma my love," he said. "Good luck and a pleasant journey! We'll miss you, you know, but I'm glad for your sake, it will be quieter in Aspen woods "

Zoya smiled and hugged her brother.

Then she and I drank some tea, and she began to dress. I gave her the warm green mittens with black edging, which I had knitted myself, and my own woollen jumper.

"No, no, I don't want them! How will you manage in the winter without something warm?" protested Zoya.

"Take them," I said quietly.

Zoya looked at me and made no further objection.

We went out together. It was a dull morning. The wind blew in our faces.

"Let me carry your bag," I said.

Zoya halted for a moment.

"Now, now! Look at me.... You're crying! Don't see me off with tears. Look at me again."

I looked. Zoya's face was happy, laughing. I tried to smile back at her.

"That's better."

She hugged me tightly, kissed me and jumped onto the step of a tram, which was just leaving.

THE NOTEBOOK

When I got home everything seemed still warm with Zoya's recent presence. The books stood in the bookstand just as she had arranged them. Her hands had placed the linen in the wardrobe, the pile of notebooks on the table. The window frames neatly puttied for the winter, and the branches of dry autumn leaves in a tall glass—every little thing reminded me of her.

In about ten days a postcard came with just a few words, "Dear Mummy! Am alive and well and feeling fine. Hope you are well. Love and kisses. Your *Zoya*."

Shura stared at the postcard for a long time, reading and rereading the number of the field post office, as if trying to commit it to memory.

"Mum?" was all he said, but that exclamation was enough to convey his surprise, reproach and bitter resentment. Proud and self-willed, he asked no questions. He was amazed and deeply hurt that Zoya had not shared her secret with him, had left without telling him a word.

"When you went away in July you did not tell Zoya anything, either. You did not have the right to do so then, and it was the same with her."

And he answered me with words such as I had never heard from him before. I had never even thought he could speak like that. "Zoya and I were one," he said, adding after a pause, "We should have gone away together."

We spoke no more about it.

The light had gone out of my life. I would sit up till late every night, sewing military uniforms and thinking: Where are you now? what are you doing? are you thinking about us.....?

One day I had a spare minute and began to put the table drawer in order. I wanted to make room for Zoya's copybooks so that they would not get dusty.

At first I came across sheets of paper closely covered with Zoya's handwriting—pages from a rough draft of her essay about Ilya Muromets. This is how it began:

"The endless sweep of the Russian land. Three giants stand guard over its peace. In the middle, on a mighty horse, sits Ilya Muromets. The heavy mace in this hand is ready to descend upon the enemy. Beside him, on either flank, ride his trusty friends Alyosha Popovich with the twinkling eyes, and the handsome Dobrynya."

I remembered the time when Zoya had read the ancient legends about Ilya Muromets, how she had brought in one day a reproduction of Vasnetsov's famous picture and gazed at it for a long time. It was with a description of this picture that she had begun her essay.

Another page read.

"The people treat him with love and affection, and weep for him when he is wounded in battle. When the 'wicked infidel' overcomes him, the Russian earth itself gives him strength:

'Whilst Ilya lay on the ground his strength became thrice as great.' "

And on the other side of the page:

"And now, centuries later, the people's desires and aspirations have come true: our land has its own worthy defenders from among the people—the Red Army. Not for nothing does the song say, 'We are born to make legends true.' We are making a wonderful legend come true, and the people sing of their heroes with the same deep love as they once sang of Ilya Muromets."

I placed these sheets carefully in Zoya's composition notebook and noticed that the essay about Ilya Muromets had been copied out neatly there and at the end of it, in Vera Sergeyevna's clear handwriting stood the word "excellent."

Then I began to put away the whole pile into the drawer and felt that something was in the way in one of the corners. My fingers touched something, and I pulled out a little notebook. I opened it.

On the first pages there were written names of writers and titles of books. Many of these had crosses against them to show that they had been read. There were Zhukovsky, Karamzin, Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Dickens, Byron, Molière, Shakespeare. Then came several pages covered with pencilled writing—half obliterated, almost illegible lines. And suddenly, in tiny ink lettering, in Zoya's clear hand:

"Everything in man should be beautiful: his face, his clothes, his soul and his thoughts (Chekhov)."

"To be a Communist means to dare, to think, to thirst, to venture (Mayakovsky)."

On the next page I noticed a hastily scribbled note in pencil: "*Othello* expresses the struggle of man for the high ideals of truth, moral Purity and sincerity. The theme of *Othello* is the victory of lofty, genuine human feeling!"

And again: "The death of a hero in Shakespeare's work is always accompanied by the triumph of a high moral principle."

As I turned over the pages of the small, slightly frayed book I seemed to hear Zoya's Voice, see her searching serious eyes and shy smile.

Here was an extract from *Anna Karenina*, about Seryozha, Anna's son:

"He was nine years old, he was a child; but he knew his own soul, it was dear to him; he cherished it as the eyelid cherishes the eye; and without the key of love he allowed no one to enter his soul."

It seemed to me that the words had been said of Zoya herself. And as I read I thought I could see her behind every line.

"Mayakovsky is a man with a great temperament, open and straight. Mayakovsky instilled new life in poetry. He is a poet-citizen, a poet-orator."

"*Satin*: 'When labour is a pleasure, life is good! When labour is a duty, life is slavery!' 'What is truth? Man—there's your truth!' 'Lies are the religion of slaves and bosses... Truth is the god of the free man! Man! That is tremendous! How proud the word rings—MAN! A man should be respected! Not pitied.....pity is degrading... but respected? I have always despised people who worry too much about their bellies. That's not the point. Man is superior to that. Man is superior to his belly!' (Gorky, *The Lower Depths*.)"

And as I went on turning the pages I read:

"Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. *Don Quixote*. Don Quixote is will, self sacrifice, intelligence."

"A book is, perhaps, the most intricate, the greatest miracle of all the miracles created by man on his road to the happiness and might of the future (Gorky)."

"Reading a good book for the first time is like gaining a great

sincere friend. To read what you have read again is like meeting an old friend once more. To finish reading a good book is like parting with one's best friend, and who knows whether one will meet him again (a Chinese adage)."

"He who travels reaches the end of the road."

"In character, manners, style, in everything—it is the simple that is beautiful (Longfellow)."

And once again, as on the day I had read Zoya's diary, I felt as if I were holding in my hands a throbbing heart—a heart which passionately wanted to love and believe.

I went right through the book, thinking for a long time over each entry, and it seemed to me that Zoya was at my side, that we were together again.

And here are the last lines, dated October 1941

"The Secretary of the Moscow Committee is a modest and simple man. He speaks briefly but clearly. His telephone number is K 0-27-00, extension 1-14."

And then large extracts from *Faust*, and the whole of the chorus in praise of Euphorion:

*"My slogan now
Is battle, the cry of victory.*

*Yes! On my wings
I will soar there!
I will soar into the fire of war,
Into battle I will soar."*

"I love Russia, my heart bleeds for her, and I cannot even imagine myself anywhere but in Russia (Saltykov-Shchedrin)."

And suddenly on the last page, like a blow straight at the heart, were the words from *Hamlet*:

"Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me!"

TANYA

The writing of this book has given me both joy and sadness. I wrote—and it seemed to me as if I were again rocking little Zoya's cradle, again holding three year-old Shura in my arms, seeing the two of them together, alive and full of hope. But the less there remains to be said, the closer the inevitable end, the more difficult it is for me to find the necessary words.

I remember the days after Zoya's departure clearly, to the finest detail.

She left—and our life became one long period of waiting. Before, when Shura came home and found his sister out, he had always asked, "Where is Zoya?" Now his first words were, "Any news?" Of late he stopped asking, but I could always read the question in his eyes.

One day he rushed into the room, excited and happy, and did something he had never done before—embraced me tightly.

"A letter!" I guessed immediately.

"And what a letter!" exclaimed Shura. "Listen, 'Dear Mama, how are you, how is your health, are you well? Mummy, if you can, just write me a few lines. When I come back from my mission I will come home to see you. Your Zoya'"

"What's the date?" I asked.

"The seventeenth of November. That means we can expect Zoya home Soon!"

And once again we started waiting, not so worriedly now, but with joy and hope. Waiting every minute of the day and night, always ready to jump up at the sound of the door opening, expecting her to arrive at any moment. . . .

But November went by, and December, and the end of January drew near. . . . There were no letters, no news of any kind.

Shura and I both worked. He took all the domestic duties on

himself, and I saw that he was trying to be for me all that Zoya had been. If he came home first he hurried to warm up the meal in time for my return. At night I would hear him get up to cover me with something warm. We were short of firewood and tried to save as much of it as we could.

One day, late in January, I was returning home late. As often happens when one is very tired I listened mechanically to odd snatches of conversation. That evening I kept hearing in the street, "Did you read *Pravda* today?" "Have you read Lidov's article?"

And in the tram a young huge-eyed haggard woman said to her companion, "What a stunning article! What a girl!"

I realized that there must be something unusual in the paper today.

"Shura," I said when I got in, "did you read *Pravda* today? They say there is a very interesting article there."

"There is," said Shura in a flat voice, his eyes averted.

"What is it about?"

"About a young partisan girl called Tanya. She was hanged by the German's."

It was cold in the room. We had grown used to that. But at Shura's words everything inside me seemed to coil up into a tight icy knot. "Some mother's child, too," I thought. "Her mother too waited for her at home, worried about her....."

Later I switched on the radio. Dispatches about the fighting, news from the labour front. And suddenly the loud-speaker said, "We are now broadcasting the article 'Tanya,' by Lidov, published in *Pravda* today, the 27th of January."

A voice full of wrath and sorrow began the story of how in the first day's of December in the Village of Petrishchevo the Germans had executed a young partisan girl called Tanya.

"Mummy," said Shura suddenly, "may I turn it off? I must be up early tomorrow."

This was surprising. Shura was a sound sleeper, he was not usually troubled by loud conversation or by the radio. Unwillingly I switched it off.

The next day I went to the Komsomol District Committee, hoping that perhaps they knew something about Zoya.

"The mission is a secret one. It may be a long time before any letters come," the Secretary told me.

A few more days of fearful anxiety dragged by, and on the 7th of February—I shall always remember that day—I came home and found a note on the table. "Mummy dear, they want to see you at the District Committee of the Komsomol."

"At last!" I thought, overjoyed. "It must be news of Zoya. A letter perhaps!"

I flew to the District Committee as if on wings. It was a dark windy evening. I could not wait for the tram to come. I stumbled, slipped and ran on again. Not a single ominous thought entered my head. I did not expect bad news, I was only waiting to find out when I should see Zoya. Would she be back soon?

"Go back home, people from the Moscow Committee of the Komsomol have just gone to see you at your flat"—I was told at the District Committee.

"Quick, quick, I must know when Zoya will be coming!" And again I did not walk, I ran home.

I threw open the door and stopped on the threshold. Two men sitting at the table stood up to meet me: the head of the Timiryazev District Department of People's Education and a stranger, a young man with a grave, rather tense face. I could see the breath coming from his mouth. It was cold in the room, neither of them had taken off their coats.

Shura was standing motionless at the window. I looked at his face, our eyes met—and suddenly I understood.... He rushed towards me, knocking something over on the way, but I could

not move, my feet seemed to be rooted to the floor.

"Lyubov Timofeyevna..... the girl Tanya in *Prauda*....." somebody said. "That was your Zoya.... We shall go to the village of Petrishchevo in a day or two."

I sat down on a chair someone had pulled up for me. There were no tears. And no air in the room. I yearned to be left alone. The word was beating in my ears: "Dead ... dead ... dead..."

* * *

Shura put me to bed and sat up with me all night. He did not cry. He looked in front of him with dry eyes and pressed my hand hard in his.

"Shura... what shall we do now?" I said at last.

And at that Shura, in spite of his self-control, flung himself down on the bed and sobbed loudly and despairingly.

"I knew it all the time ... everything," he repeated hoarsely, brokenly. "There was a photograph in *Prauda*, with the rope round her neck.... The name was different but I realized it was she... I did not want to tell you, I hoped I had made a mistake.... Tried to persuade myself I was mistaken.... I could not believe it. But I knew, I knew... .."

"Show it to me," I said.

"No!" he answered through his tears.

"Shura," I said, "I have much to face yet, I have still to see her. I ask you..."

Shura pulled his notebook out of the inside pocket of his jacket. A newspaper cutting was stuck to a clean page. I recognized the bruised and battered face of my daughter.

Shura was saying something to me. As if from afar the words reached me, "Do you know why she called herself Tanya? Do you remember Tanya Solomakha?"

I did remember and it all came clear to me. Yes, of course, it was of that girl, killed long ago, that she had been thinking when she called herself Tanya.....

IN PETRISHCHEVO

I went to Petrishchevo on February 13. I don't remember very well how we got there. I remember only that the asphalt road did not go as far as Petrishchevo, and we had to push the car for almost five kilometres. We were numb with cold when we reached the village. They took me into a hut, but I could not get warm. The cold was inside me. Then we went to Zoya's grave. They had already dug my girl out, and I saw her....

She was lying with her arms straight down by her sides, her head thrown back, with a rope round her neck. Her face, which was perfectly calm, had been beaten unmercifully. There was a large dark bruise on her cheek. Her body had been pierced time and again with a bayonet. The blood had dried on her breast....

I knelt down beside her and looked... .. I drew aside a lock of hair from her clear brow—and again was struck by the calm serenity of the torn, disfigured face. I could not tear myself away from her, I could not turn my eyes away.

A girl in a Red Army greatcoat came up to me. Gently but firmly she took my hand and helped me to my feet

"Let's go into a hut," she said.

"No," I said.

"Come. I was in the same partisan group as Zoya. I'll tell you everything."

She led me into a hut, sat down beside me and began her story. I listened to her with difficulty, as through a fog. Some things I knew already from the newspapers. She related how a group of partisans, members of the Komsomol, had crossed the front line. For two weeks they had lived in the forests, on German-occupied land. At night they carried out their commander's assignments, by day they slept somewhere on the snow and warmed themselves at a campfire. They had taken enough food for five days but they made it last for a fortnight. They shared the last crust of bread, the last drop of water.....

The name of Zoya's friend was Klava. She cried as she told me what she knew.

The time came for them to return. But Zoya kept insisting that they had done too little. She asked permission from the group commander to penetrate into Petrishchevo.

There she set fire to the houses occupied by the Germans, and the stable of a military unit. The next night she crawled up to another stable on the edge of the village. There were more than two hundred horses there. She took a bottle of benzine from her kitbag, splashed it over the building and was just bending down to strike a match when a sentry gripped her from behind. She pushed him away, snatched out a revolver but did not have time to fire. The German knocked the weapon out of her hand and raised the alarm...

Klava fell silent. Then the mistress of the hut, who had been sitting there staring into the fire, said suddenly, "And I can tell you what happened after that..... if you wish....."

I heard her out too. But I cannot write about it. Let Pyotr Lidov's story come now. He was the first to write about Zoya, he was the first to come to Petrishchevo when he heard about her; and it was he who, while the tracks were still fresh, discovered how they had tortured her and how she had died.....

HOW IT HAPPENED

"...Tanya was led in. She was motioned over to a bench. On the table opposite her were telephones, a typewriter, a radio set and piles of staff papers.

"Officers began to assemble. The owners of the house (the Voronins) were ordered to leave. The old woman lingered, and an officer shouted, 'Get out, woman!' and jabbed her in the back.

"The commanding officer of the 332nd Infantry of the 197th Division, Lieutenant Colonel Rüderer, himself interrogated Tanya.

"Sitting in the kitchen the Voronins were able to hear everything that went on in the room. Tanya answered the officer without hesitation, loudly and defiantly.

" 'Who are you?' asked the lieutenant-colonel.

" 'I won't tell you.'

" 'Was it you who set fire to the stables?'

" 'Yes, it was.'

" 'Your aim?'

" 'To destroy you.'

" Silence.

" 'When did you cross the front line?'

" 'On Friday.'

" 'You got here too soon for that.'

" 'Why should I waste time?'

"They asked Tanya who sent her and who came with her. They demanded that she should tell them who her comrades were. Through the door came her answers: No; I don't know; I won't tell; no! Then straps hissed through the air, and struck home, lacerating the bare flesh. After a few minutes a youngish officer tottered out of the room into the kitchen, buried his head in his hands and sat thus till the end of the interrogation, his eyes tightly shut and his hands stopping his ears. Even the nerves of a fascist could not stand it.

"Four burly men had taken off their belts and were lashing the girl. The owners of the house counted two hundred blows. Not a sound came from Tanya. And afterwards she again said: No; I won't tell; only her voice sounded fainter than before."

Sergeant Karl Bauerlein (who was later taken prisoner by the Red Army) was present at the tortures to which Lieutenant-Colonel Rüderer subjected Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. In his deposition he wrote:

"The little heroine of your people remained staunch. She did not know the meaning of betrayal.... She turned blue with the

cold, blood flowed from her wounds, but she said nothing....."

"..... Tanya was kept in the Voronins' hut for two hours. After the interrogation she was taken to the hut of Vasili Kulik.

"She went under guard, still half undressed, barefoot through the snow.

"When they brought her into Kulik's hut there was a large purple-black bruise on her forehead, and weals on her arms and legs. She was breathing heavily. Her hair was dishevelled, and the sweat had glued her black locks to her lofty brow. The girl's hands were bound behind her. Her lips were bloody and swollen. She had evidently bitten them when the fascists had tried to wring a confession out of her.

"She lowered herself down on a bench and sat there calm and still. A German sentry stood at the door. The girl asked for water. Vasili Kulik stepped up to the water tub, but the sentry was too quick for him. He snatched the lamp from the table and held it up to Tanya's lips. By this he meant to say that she should be given kerosene to drink, not water.

"Kulik began to plead for the girl. The sentry snarled at him, but then grudgingly gave way. She drank thirstily draining two large mugs.

"The soldiers billeted in the hut surrounded the girl and amused themselves noisily at her expense. Some of them pounded her in the sides with their fists, others held lighted matches under her chin, and one of them drew a saw across her back.

"Only when they had diverted themselves to their hearts' content did the soldiers retire to bed. Thereupon the sentry put his rifle at the ready and ordered Tanya to get up and go out of the house. He marched her along the street, the point of his bayonet almost touching her back. Then he shouted: 'Zurück!' and marched the girl in the opposite direction. Barefoot, wearing nothing but her underclothes, she walked through the snow

until her torturer himself was cold and decided that it was time to return to the warm hut.

"That sentry stood guard over Tanya from ten in the evening till two in the morning, and every hour he led her out into the street for fifteen or twenty minutes.

"At last a new sentry took over. The unfortunate girl was allowed to lie down on the bench.

"Praskovya Kulik, eager to talk to Tanya, seized at the first opportunity.

" 'Who might you be?' she asked.

" 'What is it to you?'

" 'Where do you come from?'

" 'I'm from Moscow.'

" 'Are your parents alive?'

"The girl made no reply. She lay until morning without moving, without a word or a groan, although her feet were frostbitten and must have caused her great suffering.

"In the morning the soldiers began to erect a gallows in the centre of the village.

"Praskovya again spoke to the girl, 'Was it you the day before yesterday?'

" 'Yes Were any Germans burnt?'

" 'No.'

" 'A pity. What was burnt?'

" 'Their horses. They say some arms were burnt too.....'

"At ten o'clock in the morning the officers came in. One of them again asked Tanya, 'Tell us who you are.'

"Tanya did not answer.

" 'Tell us where Stalin is.'

" 'Stalin is at his post,' answered Tanya.

"The master of the house and his wife did not hear the rest of the questioning, for they were driven out of the house and allowed in again only when the interrogation was over.

"They brought in Tanya's clothes: her blouse, trousers and stockings. Her kitbag was also there, with salt and matches in it. Her hat, fur jacket, soft woollen jumper and boots had vanished. The noncoms had already shared them out among themselves; the mittens had gone to the red-haired officers' cook.

"They dressed Tanya, and the owners of the hut helped her to pull her stockings onto her blackened feet. On her chest the Germans hung the bottles of benzine which they had taken from her, and a board with the inscription: 'Houseburner.' Thus they marched her out onto the square with the gallows.

"The place of execution was surrounded by ten cavalymen with drawn sabres, more than a hundred German soldiers and some officers. The village folk had been ordered to assemble and attend the execution, but only a few had come, and some these, after standing for a little while, quietly slipped away to their homes, so as not to witness the terrible sight.

"Under the noose hanging from the crossbeam of the gallows were two boxes, placed one on top of the other. The executioners lifted the girl onto the boxes and threw the noose round her neck. One of the officers began to focus the lens of his Kodak on the gallows. The commandant man made a sign to the soldiers acting as hangmen to wait.

"Tanya took advantage of this and, addressing the collective farmers, shouted in a loud clear voice, 'Comrades! Why are you looking so downcast? Be brave, fight, smash, burn the fascists!'

"A German standing next to her lunged out, trying either to hit her or stop her mouth, but she parried his blow and went on, 'I am not afraid of dying, Comrades! It is a great thing to die for one's people!'

"The photographer took the gallows from a distance and close too, and was now preparing to photograph it from the side. The hangmen glanced over at the commandant uneasily, and the latter hastened the photographer, '*Aber doch schneller!*'

"Then Tanya turned towards the commandant and shouted to him and the German soldiers, 'You'll hang me now, but I am not alone. There are two hundred million of us, and you can't hang us all. My death will be avenged. Men, surrender while there is still time. Victory is sure to be ours!'

"The hangman wrenched at the rope, and the noose tightened around Tanya's throat. Tugging at it with both hands she stood up on her toes and shouted with all her strength, 'Farewell, Comrades! Fight, don't be afraid! Stalin is with us! Stalin will come!'

"The executioner raised his nailed boot and kicked out the lower box, which slid along the slippery, hard-packed snow. The top box tumbled down and hit the ground with a thud. The crowd swayed back. There was a shriek, and the sound of it was flung back by the distant wall of the forest... .."

KLAVA'S STORY

"Dear Lyubov Timofeyevna,

"My name is Klava. I was in the same partisan group with Zoya. I know that when we met at Petrishevo it was hard for you to listen to me. But I also know that you would want to know about every minute which Zoya spent away from you. And it will probably be easier to read than to listen. Therefore I will tell you in this letter everything I know and remember.

"In the middle of October, together with some other Komsomol members, I was waiting in a corridor of the Moscow Committee of the Komsomol for the Secretary to receive me. Like the others, I had come there hoping to be sent into the rear of the enemy. Among the crowd I noticed a dark, grey-eyed girl. She was wearing a brown overcoat with a collar and

trimming made of the same fur. She was not talking to anybody and apparently did not know anyone there. She came out of the Secretary's office with shining joyful eyes, smiled at those who were standing by the door, and walked quickly towards the entrance. I watched her go enviously: it was clear she had been accepted.

"That same day I too was interviewed. And on October 31—I shall never forget that day—I came to the *Colosseum* cinema. From there a large group of Komsomol members were to be sent off to their unit. There was a slight drizzle falling, and it was cold and damp.

"At the entrance to the *Colosseum* I again noticed the grey-eyed girl. 'Are you going to the cinema?' I asked. She said yes, with a twinkle in her eyes. More and more boys and girls began to arrive. 'Going to the cinema?' we asked the others, and they all answered, 'Yes.' But when the ticket window opened no one bought any tickets. We looked at one another and laughed. Then I went up to the grey-eyed girl and asked, 'What's your name?' And she answered, 'Zoya.'

"Then Zoya and another girl, Katya, bought some almonds in a shop and began to share them with everybody. 'To go with the film,' said Zoya smiling. Soon we all got to know each other. And afterwards a lorry arrived. We climbed into it and drove straight through Moscow to the Mozhaïsk highway. And on the way we sang a Komsomol song of the Civil War.

"We passed the last of Moscow's houses and drove out onto the Mozhaïsk highway. There, women and teen-agers were building fortifications. And we all must have been thinking the same thing: no one shall take our capital, every Moscovite, old and young, is ready to defend Moscow!

"About six o'clock in the evening we reached our unit. It was stationed near Kuntsevo. Training began as soon as supper was over. We learnt the small arms: the Nagant revolver, the Mauser, the parabellum. We took them apart and assembled

them, then tested each other. Zoya was quick to learn all that was explained to us. 'This would be just the job for my brother,' she said to me. 'He has good hands, he can take any mechanism to pieces and put it together again in a flash, without any explanation either.'

"There were ten of us girls in the room. We hardly knew one another by name, but when it came to choosing a senior, several voices at once named Zoya. And I realized that others, as well as I, had found her to their liking.

"The next morning reveille was at six o'clock. Training was to begin at seven. Zoya came up to my bed and said, 'Up you get, or I'll give you a cold shower!' And to another girl who was rather slow she said, 'What kind of soldier are you? Once reveille's sounded you must be up at once!' During the meal she also hurried us, and someone said to her, 'What's the idea of ordering us about?' I thought: now she will say something sharp. But Zoya just looked straight at that girl and said, 'You chose me yourselves, and now you've chosen me you'll have to take orders from me.'

"After that I often heard them say of Zoya, 'She never gets angry, but she's got such a way of looking at you....'

"We did not study in class, at desks. We did our studying in the forest. We learnt to march on a compass bearing, orientate ourselves on the ground, practised shooting. We took boxes of explosive with us and learnt how to blow things up. 'Tree-blowing,' our instructor called it. We studied every day and all through the day with hardly a rest.

"Then the time came when we were called up one by one before Major Sprogis, who said again, 'Are you frightened? You won't lose your nerve now, will you? You still have the chance of leaving, giving it up. But this is your last chance. Afterwards it will be too late.' Zoya was one of the first to go into the Major's room and she came out almost immediately—her answer must have been short and firm.

"Then they gave out revolvers to us and divided us up into groups.

"On November 4 we drove out to Volokolamsk, where we were to cross the front line and penetrate into the rear of the enemy. Our task was to mine the Volokolamsk highway. There were two groups making for Volokolamsk—our and that of Konstantin P—. We went out in different directions. In Konstantin's group there were two girls—Shura and Zhenya. Bidding us good-bye they said, 'Well, girls, we mean to carry out our task like heroes, and if we die we'll die like heroes, too.' And Zoya said, 'How else.'

"We crossed the front line at the dead of night, very quietly, without a single shot being fired. Then Zoya and I were sent out on reconnaissance. We started off joyfully, for we were very anxious to get on with the job as soon as possible. But we had not gone more than a few paces when two motorcycles, which seemed to appear from nowhere, flashed past within arm's length of us. That made us realize that we must not forget caution. Then we crawled on. The autumn leaves had grown heavy and rustled, and every sound seemed so loud. Nevertheless Zoya crawled quickly and almost soundlessly and somehow very easily, as if it cost her no effort at all.

"Thus we crawled for about three kilometres along the highway. Then we turned back towards the forest to tell our group that the coast was clear. The boys went off in pairs and began to lay mines—road mines always have to be laid by two people. We four girls kept watch. Almost before the boys had time to finish we heard the roar of motors, at first scarcely audible, then growing louder and louder. We warned the boys, and all of us ran, crouching, for the wood. We had hardly regained our breath when there was an explosion. Everything around flared up for a moment. And then there was such a silence that everything around seemed to be dead. Even the forest stopped rustling. And then a second explosion, a third, and shots, and shouts....

"We made off into the thick of the forest. When it was quite light we stopped and camped. We congratulated one another because it was November 7. At midday Zoya and I went to a main road which was used by lorry columns, and scattered sharp spikes everywhere—they would pierce the enemy's tyres. And I noticed something of which I became more and more convinced every day: you were not afraid when you were with Zoya. She would do everything very neatly, coolly and confidently. Perhaps that was why we all liked to go out scouting with her.

"That evening we returned 'home,' to our unit. We reported on the way we had carried our mission, and washed in the bathhouse. I remember how after that Zoya and I had our first personal talk. We were sitting on the bed. Zoya put her arms round her knees. Short-haired and rosy-cheeked after the bath, she seemed to me very, very young. And suddenly she asked, 'Tell me, what were you before you joined the unit?' 'A school teacher.' 'That means I should address you formally!' exclaimed Zoya.

"I forgot to tell you that Zoya used the familiar form of address to all the girls and kept the formal one for the boys. And they, too, began addressing her formally. But now she came out with this so funny that I could not help laughing: I saw at once that Zoya really was a young girl, that she was barely eighteen and had come here straight from school.

" 'Why should you suddenly start using the formal address?' I said. 'I am only three years older than you.'

"Zoya looked thoughtful, then asked, 'Are you in the Komsomol?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Well, I'll use the familiar form then. Have you any parents?'

" 'I have. And a sister.'

"I have a mother and a brother. My father died when I was ten. Mama brought us up by herself. When we fulfil our mission I'll take the whole group to Moscow to meet Mama. You'll see what she is like. And Mama will simply love you all. I've got used to you and everybody, and I'll stay with you till the end of the war."

"This was our first heart to heart talk.

"The next day we were given a new assignment. The composition of the group changed, but all the girls were the same as before: Zoya, Lida Bulgina, Vera Voloshina and I. We had all grown very chummy. Our new group commander's name was Boris Krainov. He was very calm and coolheaded, a little rough in speech, but he never swore and never allowed others to do so. Zoya liked to repeat his words, 'You can swear your head off, but you're none the wiser for it, and neither is anybody else.'

"With bottles of benzine and grenades hanging at our belts, we went into the enemy's rear. This time we had to fight our way through, but no one was hurt. And the next day we had our first real battle. We were caught in cross fire from three sides.

" 'Lie down, all!' shouted Vera. We dropped down, pressing close to the ground. When the firing ceased we crawled away from the danger zone for about eight hundred metres, and only then realized that three of our comrades were missing.

" 'Let me go back and see if there are any wounded,' said Zoya to the commander.

" 'Whom will you take with you?' asked Boris.

" 'I'll go alone.'

" 'Wait. Let the Germans quiet down a bit.'

" 'No, it will be too late then.'

" 'All right, you may go.'

"Zoya crawled away. We waited and waited, but she did not return. An hour passed, then another and a third... The horrible conviction began to grow inside me that Zoya had been killed.

"At last just as dawn was breaking, she returned. She was loaded with weapons, her hands were covered with blood, her face was grey with fatigue.

"Our three comrades were dead. Zoya had crawled up to each of them and taken their weapons. From Vera's pocket she had taken a photograph of her mother and a little notebook with poetry; from Kolya—some letters.

"We made our first campfire deep in the forest, out of branches of dry fir—it makes no smoke. You could have put the campfire on a plate. We were afraid to light a big one. We warmed our hands and heated tinned food. Winter was beginning with no snow at all, there was no water to be had anywhere, and we suffered badly from thirst.

"I was sent out on preliminary reconnaissance. No sooner had I laid myself down in a young fir wood than several Hitlerites sauntered up, stopped quite close by and began talking. They talked and guffawed. About an hour dragged by. My legs were quite numb, my lips parched. They went away at last, and I returned empty-handed from my unsuccessful reconnaissance. Zoya was the first to meet me. She asked no questions, just wrapped her scarf round my neck and sat me down by the campfire. Then she went off somewhere and came back with a can in her hands, and said, 'I have saved a few icicles here for you. They've melted into some water. Drink.'

" 'I will never forget that,' I said.

" 'Drink it up,' said Zoya.

"Then our group moved off again. Zoya and I went on about a hundred metres ahead in the scouting detail, behind us came the rest in single file, about a metre and a half between them. And suddenly Zoya stopped and raised her hand as a signal for

the group to stop. It turned out that there was a dead Red Army man lying on the ground in front of Zoya. We examined him. He had been shot in the legs and through the temple. In his pocket we found a note with the words: 'From Lieutenant of the Antitank Battalion Rodionov. I request to be considered a Communist.' Zoya folded this sheet and pushed it into the inside pocket of her padded jacket. Her face was grim, her brows knitted, and at that moment I thought that she no longer looked like a girl but like a soldier who would take merciless vengeance on the enemy.

"We moved on to Petrishchevo where large enemy forces were concentrated. We cut communication wires as we went. At night we reached Petrishchevo. The village is surrounded by dense forest. We went deep into it and lit a real fire. The commander detailed one of the boys for sentry duty. The others sat down round the campfire. The moon rose, round and yellow. Snow had been falling for several days. Huge, thick, snow-covered fir trees stood all round.

" 'We could do with a fir tree like that in Moscow, on Manezhnaya Square!' said Lida.

" 'Dressed up like that too!' added Zoya.

"Then Boris began sharing out our last rations. Each of us received half a rusk, a lump of sugar and a small piece of dried fish. The boys swallowed everything in one go, but we nibbled slowly, trying to make the most of it. Zoya looked at her neighbour and said, 'I've had enough. Here, take this.'

"And she offered him the rusk and the sugar.

"He refused at first, then took them.

"We were silent. Lida Bulgina said, 'How I want to live!'

"I will not forget the sound of those words! In them there was great faith that a long and good life lay ahead of us. And then Zoya began to recite Mayakovsky. I had never heard her read poetry before. It was wonderful: the night, the forest all in

snow, the fire burning, and Zoya saying in a quiet clear voice, and with such expression:

Across the sky
the storm clouds fly,

The rains pour
in the gloom.

Beneath an ancient
wagon

The workers huddled lie
And hears

a proud whisper
The water,

above and around,
'Here in four years' time

from now
There'll be a garden-town.'

"I also love Mayakovsky and I knew these lines well, but then I seemed to be hearing them for the first time.

The ground
is dank and wet,

The comfort
isn't great,

The workers sitting
in the dusk

Munch their
sodden
bread.

But the whisper
drowns their hunger,

It trickles
slowly down,

'Here in four years' time
from now

There'll be a
garden-town!"

"I looked round and saw that everybody was still, all eyes were on Zoya. And her face was flushed, and her voice rang out firmer and firmer:

I know

there'll be a town,

I know

its garden will be grand

While there are

such people

In the

Soviet Land'

" 'More!' we all said in one voice, when she finished

"And Zoya began to recite everything she knew by heart from Mayakovsky. And she knew a lot. I remember with what feeling she recited a part of the poem *At the Top of My Voice*:

...I raise

like a Bolshevik party ticket,

The full hundred volumes

of my

party books.

"And that is how I remember that night: the campfire, Zoya, Mayakovsky's poetry....

" 'You must like him very much,' said Boris.

" 'Rather!' replied Zoya. 'There are many poets "good and various," but Mayakovsky is one of my great favourites.'

"After the locality had been reconnoitred I heard a short conversation between Boris and Zoya, 'You'll stay here on duty.'

" 'Please send me out on a mission.'

" 'Only boys will be sent out on missions.'

" 'Difficulties ought to be shared equally. Please!'

"That 'please' sounded like a demand. And Boris agreed. I went out on reconnaissance, Zoya--on a mission to Petrishchevo. Before she left she said to me, 'Let's change revolvers. Mine is better than yours. But I can use yours and mine equally well.'

"She took my simple Nagant revolver and gave me her semi automatic. I still have it --No. 12719, Tula Armoury, 1935. I shall not part with it until the very end of the war.

"Zoya returned from her mission transfigured--there's no other way of saying it. She had set fire to a stable and a house, and hoped that some Germans had been burnt there.

" 'You feel quite different when you're doing a real job!' she said.

" 'Have you been doing nothing up till now? You go on reconnaissance and cut communications.....'

" 'That's not the same!' Zoya interrupted me 'That's not enough!'

"With the commander's permission she went to Petrishchevo a second time. We waited three days. But she did not return. The rest you know.

"Zoya used to tell me that you and your family were very happy together and had hardly ever been apart. And I have decided that even the little I have to tell will be dear to you. And although I only knew Zoya for a month, I look upon her, as do all the other members of our group, as one of the finest, one of the purest people we have ever known.

"When you came to Petrishchevo I saw your son too. He was standing beside you at Zoya's grave. Zoya said to me once, 'My brother and I are not at all alike, we have quite different characters.' But I looked at Shura and realized that this was not so, I can see him standing there, dry eyed, looking down at Zoya and biting his lip.

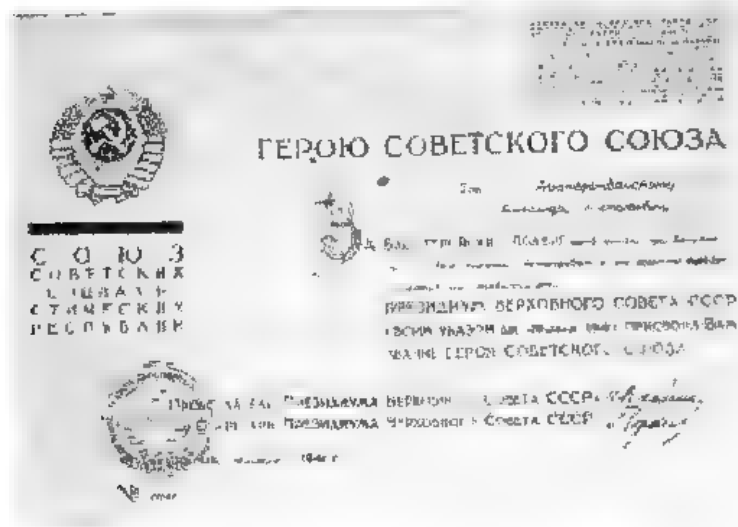
"I have no words to console you with. I realize that the words do not exist that could console you in your grief. But I want to tell you this: the memory of Zoya will never die, it cannot die. She lives among us. She will arouse others to the struggle. Her feat will light the road for many. And our love, the love of your daughters and sons throughout our land, shall

always be with you, dear Lyubov Timofeyevna.

"Klava Miloradova."

* * *

A few days after my journey to Petrishchevo the radio brought the news that Zoya had been posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.



The diploma of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. conferring the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya

Early one morning in the beginning of March I went to the Kremlin to receive Zoya's diploma. A warm spring wind fanned my face. I was thinking of something which had become for Shura and me a sad habit, which accompanied our every thought and deed, "Zoya will never see this. She loved the spring. And now she is dead. And she will never walk across the Red Square again."

I did not have to wait long. I was ushered into a big, high

room. I did not realize at first where I was, and suddenly I saw a man getting up from his chair.

"Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin!" I realized all of a sudden.

Yes, it was Mikhail Ivanovich coming towards me. His face was so familiar from his portraits. I had often seen him on the plinth of the Mausoleum. Then his kind wrinkled eyes had always been smiling. But now they were stern and sad. His hair had turned quite white, and his face seemed to me so tired.....With both hands he shook my hand, and quietly and very tenderly wished me good health and strength. Then he handed me the diploma.

"In memory of your daughter's great feat," I heard him say.

A month later Zoya's body was brought to Moscow and buried in the Novodevichy Cemetery. A monument has been placed on her grave, and on its black marble are carved the words of Nikolai Ostrovsky, the words which Zoya once wrote as a motto, as a behest in her notebook, and which she justified by her short life and by her death: "Man's dearest possession is life, and it is given to him to live but once... So he must live that, dying, he can say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the Liberation of Mankind."

SHURA

Those were days of acute grief for Shura and me. We no longer waited, we knew that there was nothing to wait for. Before, our life had been full with the faith that we would again see and embrace our Zoya; when we went to the letter box we would look into it with hope: it might bring us news of Zoya. Now, we would pass it by without looking—we knew there was nothing for us there. Nothing which could bring us joy.

A very sad letter arrived from Aspen Woods, from my father. He was overcome by Zoya's death. "I cannot understand how it can be. An old man like me living and Zoya gone," he wrote,

and there was such distracted and inconsolable grief in these lines! The whole letter was stained with tears, and I could not make out some of the words.

"I am very sorry for the old people," said Shura quietly after reading his grandfather's letter.

Shura was my support now, all that was left to me in life. He tried to give me as much of his time as he could. He who before used to shy at any sign of "softness" was now a gentle and tender son. "Mummy darling," he would now say, although he had stopped calling me that since he was five. He began to see and notice things which had escaped his notice before. I started smoking, and he noticed that if I lighted a cigarette it meant that I was on the verge of tears. He would see me searching for my pack, take a look at my face and come up to me, "What's the matter? Now, now, chin up! Please, Mummy....."

At night he would always know if sleep were eluding me. He would come up, sit on the edge of my bed and stroke my hand in silence. When he went away I felt deserted and helpless. Shura had become the head of the family now.

After lessons (school had started again) he used to come straight home, and when there was no air-raid warning he would sit down with a book. But even while reading he did not forget about me. Sometimes he would just call out softly, "Mummy!" "Yes, Shura....."

And again he would return to his book. From time to time he would ask, "Are you asleep? Here, listen...." And he would read aloud the lines which had appealed to him.

Once, when he was reading the artist Kramskoy's letters, he said, "How true this is, 'The most precious gift of an artist is his heart.' Well put, isn't it? This is how I understand it. you must be able not only to see—that is not enough. The main thing is to understand and feel..... Ah, Mummy!" he exclaimed suddenly. "How I am going to study after the war, if you only knew!"

"Are you asleep?" he asked another time. "May I turn on the radio? I think there is some music on."

I nodded. And suddenly the strains of the waltz from Chaikovsky's Fifth Symphony floated into the room.

Every little thing was a test for us in those days, and this too was a test. Zoya had loved the Fifth Symphony best of all. We listened in silence, fearing even to sigh aloud, fearing that the siren would interrupt the music, and we would not be able to hear it all through....

And when the last notes of the finale died away Shura said with deep conviction, "I'm sure they'll play the finale of the Fifth Symphony on Victory Day. What do you think?"

The days went by. The enemy was thrown back from Moscow, but his resistance was stiff. The Germans had seized Byelorussia, most of the Ukraine, besieged Leningrad, and were pushing towards Stalingrad. They burnt and murdered on their way. They tortured, tormented, hanged, strangled, crucified. All former conceptions of bestiality, of cruelty, paled in comparison with what we learned during this war. The newspaper seared your hands and heart, the radio brought news that made you gasp and struggle for breath.

Listening to the dispatches of the Soviet Information Bureau Shura would grind his teeth, and then walk silently about the room for a long time, his brows drawn, his fists clenched.

Occasionally his comrades called on him: the slim Volodya Yuryev, the son of Lydia Nikolayevna who had taught Zoya and Shura in the fourth grade, Yura Braudo, whom I already knew, Volodya Titov, and another boy, whose first name I do not remember, but whose surname was Nedelko. Gradually they began to call more and more often, but whenever I came upon them they would immediately fall silent and hasten to take their leave.

"Why do the boys go away as soon as I come in?"

"They don't want to bother you," said Shura evasively.

FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

One day, when I was taking the newspaper out of the letter box, several letters fluttered to my feet. I picked them up and opened the first one that came to hand—a triangular envelope from the front, without a stamp, slightly soiled at the edges.

"Dear Mother....." I read, and the tears rolled down my cheeks.

It was a letter from people I did not know, sailors of the Black Sea Fleet. They tried to support me in my grief, called Zoya their sister and promised to avenge her.

From that day the post brought me letters daily. Where did they not come from! From all the fronts, from all over the country, so many warm, friendly hands stretched out towards Shura and me, so many hearts turned towards us. Letters came from both children and grownups, from mothers who had lost their children in the war, from children whose parents had been murdered by the fascists, and from men who were now on the fields of battle. They all wanted to ease our grief by sharing it with us.

Shura and I were too badly wounded. There was nothing that could heal that wound. But—I do not know how to express it—the love and sympathy which filled every letter warmed us. We were not alone in our grief. So many people tried to lighten our grief with a sincere and gentle word—and that meant so much, it helped us so much!

Not long after I received the first few letters, there was a timid knock on the door of our room, and a strange girl entered. She was tall and thin, and her dark face, short hair and large eyes—although they were not grey but blue—reminded me of Zoya. She stood shyly in front of me, twisting her handkerchief in her hands.

"I'm from a munition plant," she said hesitantly, looking at me shyly from under her eyelashes. "I... our Komsomol members that is... we all very much want you to come! Come

to one of our Komsomol meetings and tell us about Zoya. Please come! I realize it will be difficult for you but we....."

I said that I could not give a talk but that I would come to the meeting.

The next evening I went to the plant. It was on the outskirts of Moscow. Many of the buildings round it were half destroyed.

"A bomb fell. There was a fire," my guide explained briefly in answer to my mute question.

When we entered the factory club the meeting had already begun. The first thing I saw was Zoya's face looking down at me from the wall behind the chairman's table. I sat down quietly on one side and began to listen.

A young lad was speaking. He was saying that for the second month the plan was not being fulfilled. He spoke angrily, heatedly. Then another lad, a little older, spoke. This one said that there were less and less experienced hands in the shop, and that all their hopes rested on the pupils of the trade reserve school.

"But it's freezing! The shop is no better than a cellar! Your hands freeze onto the metal!" came a voice from the back of the room.

"For shame!" cried my companion, turning round sharply.

On the impulse of the moment I stood up and asked for the floor. They invited me to go up onto a low rostrum, and as I walked towards it Zoya's eyes met mine. And now Zoya's portrait was behind me, a little to the side, as if she were standing at my elbow and encouraging me. But I did not say a word about her.

"Every day and every hour your brothers and sisters at the front are sacrificing their lives," I said. "Leningrad is starving.... Every day people are being killed by enemy shells....."

No, I will not try to recall what I said then. I do not remember the words. But the young people's eyes, glued to mine, told me

that I was saying the right thing.

Then they answered me, briefly and resolutely.

"We will work even harder," said the one who had spoken first.

"We will call our brigade after Zoya," said another.

A month later they telephoned me from the plant.

"Lyubov Timofeyevna, we are overfulfilling our plan now," I heard.

And I realized that to give way to grief would be to betray the memory of Zoya. There must be no giving in, no losing heart. I had no right to despair. I had to live. I had to fight for the sake of the future, for the sake of the happiness of my people.

It was very difficult for me to address people, to speak to a large audience. But I could not refuse when I was asked to come, and that happened more and more often. I did not dare to refuse because I understood: if my words helped, if they reached people, and stirred the youth, if I could make a contribution, no matter how modest, to the great struggle with the enemy—it was my duty to do so.

FAREWELL, SHURA

"Where have you been, Shura? What kept you so long?"

"I'm sorry, Mummy darling, forgive me, please. I couldn't help it."

Every day Shura came home later and later. Something was worrying him, and he was thinking hard about it all the time. What was on his mind? He did not tell me. We were not in the habit of questioning each other. We shared our innermost thoughts without waiting to be prompted. That was how it had always been. Why was he so silent now? What had happened? What else lies in store for us? Perhaps there had been a letter from Aspen Woods? Were the old people all right? I decided to ask Shura about everything.

On the day I made that decision I was cleaning the table and swept off a sheet of paper lying there. I bent down and picked it up. On the paper in Shura's handwriting there were written the lines about the tank driver who, like Captain Gastello, died ramming his flaming tank into the enemy.

*The tank roared on across the ruts,
No power could hold it back.
The smoke behind it whirled in gusts,
In wreaths of smoky black.
As an avenging sword it darts
Now here, now there again
To crush a string of transport carts
Amidst the German slain.
Across a ditch he dashes on—
So fast the eye can't follow;
And not one yard of land he's won
Will he yield back tomorrow
And though he perished in the flames,
Yet shines his glory far;
It lives while on our tanks engraved
Still gleams the Soviet star.*

As I read these lines I suddenly understood something I had been afraid to think of all this time: Shura would go away. He would go away to the front, and nothing, nothing could stop him. He had not yet told me anything, not a word, and he was not yet seventeen, but I knew: it would be so.

And I was not mistaken. One evening when I came home I heard the sound of noisy conversation coming from our room, and on opening the door I saw the five of them—Shura, Volodya Yuryev, Volodya Titov, Nedelko and Yura Braudo—sitting there, each with a cigarette between his lips, the room full of tobacco smoke. Until that moment I had never seen Shura smoking.

"What are you about?" I asked.

"The General himself treated us," answered Shura unhesitatingly, as if he had made up his mind. "Weare going to the Ulyanovsk Tank Training School, you know. They have already accepted us."

Silently I dropped down on a chair.

"Mummy darling," Shura said that night as he sat down on my bed. "Please try to understand! Strangers write to you, 'We will avenge Zoya.' And am I, her own brother, to stay at home? How could I look people in the face then?"

I was silent. If I had been unable to find words to stop Zoya, what words could I find now...?"

On May 1, 1942, Shura went away.

"No one will be seeing them off," he said about his friends. "And you needn't see me off. Or else they'll be hurt. All right? Just wish me a good journey."

I nodded, for the words stuck in my throat. My son embraced me, kissed me hard and was gone. The door slammed shut, and this time I was left quite alone.

A few days later a letter came from Aspen Woods. Mother had died. "She never got over Zoya's death," wrote my father.

NEWS FROM ULYANOVSK

Shura wrote to me nearly every day. He had been put into the same section as his old friends, and he jokingly called it "the Ulyanovsk Branch of the 10th Grade of Moscow School No. 201."

"I'm afraid I'm no good at anything!" he complained in one of his first letters. "I can't even keep in line; today, for instance, I trod on a fellow's heel. I cannot salute the commanders either. And they don't pat me on the head for that!"

Time passed, and in another letter he wrote:



Alexander Kosmodemyansky when at the Ulyanovsk
Tank Training School

"I get tired, I don't have enough sleep but I work like a tiger. I have already learnt the rifle, the grenade and the revolver well. The other day we went out to the range, where we fired from a tank. For a beginner my results weren't bad. I got a good mark for target shooting from a tank with gun and machine gun at ranges of 400 and 500 metres! You would not know me now. I salute the commanders very well and I can keep in step with the rest of the fellows."

On the eve of the exams Shura began to beg me in every letter, "Mama, if you can, get me a wide belt, with a shoulder belt, if possible." And again a few days later, "Do your best, Mummy! What kind of officer shall I be if my belt is no good." Through these lines I could again see the beseeching eyes of little Shura. He used to carry on in almost exactly the same way, using almost the same words, when a small child, if he wanted something very badly.

Here I have about a hundred of Shura's letter's before me, from the very first to the last, and as I read them again I can see how my boy grew up to manhood.

One day I received this letter from him:

"Mama, my studies at the training school are drawing to an end the exams begin on November 1. I get tired, don't have enough sleep, but I keep working, It has made a difference—my being here half as long as the others I've fallen behind.

"These exams will be the most important in my life. I will muster all my strength, all my attention, because the Country must receive a well-trained tank lieutenant, not a junior lieutenant and certainly not a senior sergeant. You understand—it is not pride, or vanity. I simply must do everything I can in order to be more necessary, more useful. I read how the fascists burn our towns and villages, how they torture the women and children, and I remember how they tortured Zoya and I only want one thing: to go to the front as soon as possible."

And another letter:

"Mama, listen: the state examinations are over. 'Excellent' for technical subjects, 'excellent' for gunnery, 'excellent' for tactics and military topography....."

And at the end of this proud and jubilant letter there was a postscript, "I have had a letter from Grandad—he is ill and lonely."

One warm autumn evening I sat at the window gazing into the street. Before me lay some letters which I had to answer, but still I could not tear my eye's away from the light cloudless sky. And suddenly a pair of broad warm hands was clapped over my eyes.

"Shura!" was all I could say

"You did not hear my knock, nor the door opening," he said laughing. "I was standing at the door looking at you and you just kept sitting there!" And again covering my eyes with his hands (perhaps to make it easier for me to hear what he was going to say) he said, "I have come to say good-bye. I am leaving for the front tomorrow."

He was a full-grown man, his shoulders were even broader now, but his blue eyes were as boyishly merry and frank as before.

And again I lived through a night of sorrow and anxious foreboding. Shura slept soundly, with one hand under his cheek, and I kept getting up to look at him, and could not take my eyes off him. I was afraid to think that the night would end. But the dawn broke at the usual time. Shura jumped up, washed and dressed quickly, drained a cup of tea at one gulp, and coming up to me said, as he usually did now, "Don't see me off. Take care of yourself. And don't worry about me."

"Be true... and steadfast. Write often...." I answered with difficulty.

WAR CORRESPONDENT

A month passed after Shura's departure. There were no letters. I was afraid to go to the letter box—I always feared I would find some terrible news there..... Those were very difficult days, full of a painful foreboding such as I had not

experienced even after Zoya left. For then I did not know what it meant to lose one's child. Now I knew.

At times my alarm would become so acute that I tried to run away from it, as if it were possible to run away from oneself, from one's thoughts. I used to walk about the streets, trying to make myself tired enough to fall asleep when I came home. But I rarely succeeded in this. No matter how many streets I passed through, and how many miles I covered, I would still lie awake and wide eyed through the night.

I would often go to the Novodevichy Cemetery to visit Zoya's grave. Once as I was approaching the grave I saw a broad shouldered army officer standing near it. As I came up he turned round. He was a man of about thirty-five, with a fine open face and clear penetrating grey eyes. It seemed that he was about to address me. I looked at him questioningly, but after a moment's indecision he walked away. I dismissed him from my mind, but as I was leaving I again saw him at the bend of the path; he was coming towards me.

"Lyubov Timofeyevana?" he asked hesitantly.

"Yes," I answered, surprised.

Then he introduced himself

"My name is Lidov."

I had not forgotten that name. It was Lidov who had written those memorable lines in *Pravda* - the story of how Tanya, the young partisan, had died...

I shook his hand gratefully. We walked slowly along the path to the gate.

"I am very glad we've met," I said warmly. "I have wanted to meet you for a long time....."

And we began to talk just as if we had known each other for years. He told me how he had first heard about Zoya. He was spending the night in a tiny half-destroyed hut near Mozhaik. When nearly all the soldiers had gone to sleep an old man came

into the hut to warm himself. He lay down on the floor beside Lidov.

"The old man could not get to sleep," related Lidov. "He was groaning and sighing as if very upset. 'Where are you bound for?' I asked him. 'What's the trouble?' "

And then the old man told Lidov what he had heard about the girl whom the Hitlerites had hanged in Petrishchevo Village. He did not know the details. He just kept repeating, "They were hanging her, and she made a speech....."

Lidov got up at once and went to Petrishchevo. And from that night and for the next ten days he did not rest until he found out everything about the death of the unknown girl who had called herself Tanya. He used only facts because he knew that facts would speak louder than anything a journalist or writer could invent.

"Why did you never come to see me?" I asked.

"I was afraid it would be too difficult for you," He answered simply.

"Have you been at the front long?"

At that he smiled for the first time, a broad clear smile which lit up the whole of his face

"I've been at the front since the first hour of the war," he said. "When they did not even know about the war here in Moscow. June 22 found me in Minsk, as a correspondent of *Pravda*....."

And again he smiled as he recalled how in the cellar of the telegraph office where he had taken refuge during a heavy bombing he had been handed a telegram from Moscow, sent the day before.

It was a very peaceful telegram. The editors wanted Lidov to write about the preparations for the harvesting campaign. He stuffed the telegram in his pocket and dashed off in his car to a unit which was preparing for defensive action. The streets

of Minsk were already wrapped in flames and bombs were falling everywhere.

That day Lidov did send a dispatch to *Pravda*, but it was not about the harvesting campaign.

He told me all this very simply, in a few words. And as I walked on I thought, "You may know a man for years and be unable to say anything about him. I have spent less than an hour with Lidov, and he has said very little about himself, but I know a lot about him. I know the main thing. I know that he is straight and honest, levelheaded and brave, that under any conditions he will keep himself in hand and never lose his head. I know that at the front it is not by words, but by deeds, by his whole conduct that he teaches those around him to be calm and steadfast."

"I am off to the front again today," he said to me as we parted, and added quietly, "And after the war I will definitely write a book about Zoya."

FIVE PHOTOGRAPHS

October 24, 1943, put me to a new test. The newspapers that day carried five photographs which had been found on the body of a Hitlerite officer killed by a Soviet soldier at the village of Potapovo, near Smolensk. The German had photographed the murder of Zoya, the last minutes of her life. I saw the gallows with the snow all round, I saw my girl, my Zoya, among the Germans, the board with the inscription "Houseburner" on her chest, and those who tortured and tormented her.

Ever since I had learnt of my daughter's death I had been beset, day and night, by one thought: What were her feelings, what was she thinking of when she made her last terrible journey? I had been swept by a helpless longing: Why had I not been with her when she must have needed me most? Why had I been unable to relieve her last moments either by word or glance? And now the five photographs seemed to take me



In October 1943 Soviet troops routed the 197th German Infantry Division, the officers and soldiers of which had tortured Zoya to death. On the body of a Hitlerite killed at the village of Potapovo, near Smolensk, photographs were found, which the fascist brute had taken of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya's execution.

with Zoya on her last journey. Now, with my own eyes I saw them killing her, I was there myself, but too late..... The photographs seemed to shout, "Look how they tortured her! Look, be a silent witness of her death! Live again through all the pain, all the torment hers and yours....."

There she walks, tortured and disarmed, but how much strength and pride there is in her slightly bowed head! In those last minutes she must scarcely have noticed the hangmen around her. What was she thinking of? Was she preparing herself for death? Was she remembering all her short happy life...?

I cannot bring myself to write about it.... Let him who reads this book look at the terrible German photograph and study Zoya's face. And he will see that Zoya is the conqueror. Her murderers are nought before her. With her is all that is high, beautiful, sacred, all that is human, all the truth and purity of the world, which does not die, which cannot die. And as for them—they are not human. They are not men. They are not even beasts. They are fascists. And they are doomed. Alive they are dead. Today, tomorrow, in a thousand years, their names, even their graves, will be hateful and vile in the eyes of man.

"I WANT TO LIVE!"

Still no letters from Shura.... But then, shortly after the five photographs, I opened *Pravda* and there was a dispatch on the third page:

"Army in the Field. October 27 (by telegraph). Units of X formation are engaged in fierce battles, destroying the remnants of the 197th German Infantry Division, the officers and soldiers of which in November 1941 in the village of Petrishebevo tortured and murdered the valourous partisan Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. The five German photographs published in *Pravda* showing her execution have called forth a fresh wave of wrath among our soldiers and officers. Here, Zoya's brother—

Komsomol member and tank officer, Lieutenant Kosmodemyansky is fighting valiantly to avenge his sister. In the battle the crew of the 'KV' tank under the command of Comrade Kosmodemyansky was first to break through the enemy's defended locality, shooting and crushing the Hitlerites. Major G. Vershinin."

Shura was alive! And avenging his sister. And he was destroying those very Hitlerites who had tortured and murdered Zoya....

And again I began to receive letters, not from peaceful Ulyanovsk now, but from the very thick of battle.

And on January 1, 1944, I was awakened by the doorbell.

"Who can that be?" I wondered aloud. I opened the door and stood petrified by the suddenness of it: framed in the doorway stood my son, Shura.

He seemed a real giant to me—straight, broad shouldered, wearing a long greatcoat with the smell of frost still in it. His face glowed with the wind and the quick walk, the snowflakes were melting on his thick brows and eyelashes, his eyes shone gaily.

"Why do you look like that, don't you recognize me?" he asked laughing.

"I took you for Ilya Muromets at first!" I answered.

This was a most unexpected and a most precious New Year's present.

Shura's joy at his home-coming was no less than mine. He would not leave my side for a moment, and if he wanted to go out—for cigarettes or just for a stroll—he would say like a little boy, "Come with me!"

Several times a day he would ask the same thing, "Tell me how you live."

"But I've written about it all....."

"Do you still get letters? Let's see them.....Let me help you to answer them."

I really did need help. The letters kept coming in an endless stream.

People wrote to me, to the school where Zoya had studied, to the editors of newspapers, to district committees of the Komsomol.

"When I'm on sentry duty it seems to me that Zoya is beside me," Octyabrina Smirnova, a girl soldier of the same age as Zoya, wrote to me from Stalingrad.

"I swear I will serve the people honestly, I will be like Zoya," wrote a Moscow girl, also of Zoya's age, to the Tagansky District Committee of the Komsomol, asking to be sent to the front

"I will bring up my pupils to be like Zoya, like your brave wonderful daughter," said a young teacher from the Bashkir Autonomous Republic.

"It is our grief, it is the people's grief," wrote the children of a school in Novosibirsk.

They kept coming in—sincere, heartfelt letters, vows, poems, from Siberia, the Baltic coast, the Urals, from Tbilisi. Letters came from abroad—from India, from Australia, America.....

Shura read them all. Then went back to one which had come from England. Here it is, retranslated from a Russian copy I have kept:

Dear Comrade Lyubov Kosmodemyanskaya,

My wife and I live in a small flat just outside London. We have just read about your dear brave daughter. The words she spoke before her death brought tears to our eyes. So much bravery, so much courage in so young a girl! We are expecting our first child at the beginning of next year, and if it is a girl we will call her after your daughter—the daughter of the great people of the first Socialist state

With unbounded admiration we hear and read about your great struggle. But it is not enough to admire, we want to fight at your side—not words, but deeds, that is what is needed now. We are sure that the hour is not far off when we shall at last see the destruction of the vile fascism which we hate as much as you do. Your people will go down in history as the people whose valour, courage and endurance made possible the victory over fascism. The British people understand well that they owe Russia a debt which cannot be repaid, and people often say here, "What would have happened to us, but for the Russians!"

In the cinema when Stalin comes on the screen the clapping starts at once with cheers of "Hurrah" and welcoming shouts. We end our letter with this wish: to victory and to our eternal friendship—in war and peace

Long live the Soviet people and their glorious Red Army!

With brotherly greetings,

Mable and David Rees.

"Did you answer them?" asked Shura. "Good. I think it came from the heart, don't you? You can see they understand that we are fighting for everybody, not for ourselves alone. I only hope they don't forget that!"

In the evening my brother Sergei came round. Shura was very glad to see him. They sat down at the table, facing each other, and talked till late at night. I was doing some housework and kept on going out into the kitchen, so only snatches of the conversation reached me.

"...Didn't you write once that you broke away from the column and struck into the rear of the enemy?" said Sergei. "What for? That's not bravery, that's devil-may-care stuff. I don't like it! You've got to be brave, but why all this swashbuckling stuff?"

"Once you start thinking of your own safety you forget about bravery!" came the fierce answer.

"And aren't you responsible for the lives of your men? After all, you're in command....."

"Tell me this, Shura," I heard a little later, "how do you get on with your subordinates? Now don't misunderstand me.... Young fellows sometimes get big ideas about themselves....."

"I'm friends with my men. If you only knew what they're like"

And again my brother's voice, "About bravery.... I'd strongly advise you to read Leo Tolstoy's story 'The Raid' again. It's short and to the point."

Shura did not speak much about himself. He had become far more restrained than before and seemed to weigh every word. During this visit I felt that he had changed a lot. It was difficult to say how. Perhaps I am wrong, but it seems to me that whoever has been in battle but once, whoever has walked that narrow path, with life on one hand and death on the other, does not like to speak much about war, about the dangers he has endured. I realized that Shura had seen and gone through a lot and it must have been for this reason that he had become stern, far more grown-up and self-possessed, and at the same time—more gentle and softer.

The next day Shura went to the hospital to visit a wounded comrade. When he returned his face was quite different. I hardly recognized the merry giant of the day before. I looked worriedly into his dear face, so very young still. It was pale and drawn, and his cheekbones, his jaw, his knitted brows, with the furrow between them, and his tightly pressed lips, seemed suddenly to have become more prominent.

"What the fascists have done to him!" he said through his teeth. "He's my best friend, you know. He was an orphan before he was a year old. It was hard for him, but he grew up into a

real man. He finished his military training, then went through the siege of Leningrad, was given medical exemption, but ignored it and went to the front again. And just recently he got everything at once: splinters in the lung, near the heart, in his arm, and a wound in the stomach, and shell shock. He cannot speak, cannot move, cannot hear—the horror of it! His name's Kolya Lopokha. If you could have seen how glad he was to see me...!"

Shura went over to the window, and with his back to me he said, fiercely and passionately, as if he were repeating a charm, "I'll return to the ranks! No arms, no legs, blinded—no matter, I will live! I very, very much want to live!"

And on the third day after his arrival Shura said, "Don't be offended, Mummy darling, but I am leaving before time. It's hard for me here. People are dying out there, and hereI understand that life must go on... but it's difficult for me."

"Stay a little longer, dearest! After all, you deserve a rest...."

"It's not a rest for me anyhow. I still can't think of anything but the front ... and my comrades. And if you can, Mummy dear, see me off this time, will you? I want to be with you as long as I can."

I saw him off from Byelorussian Station. It was a quiet, frosty evening. A star twinkled above the railway lines in the greenish sky. And this stillness seemed so strange to me at a time when I was parting with my son, knowing that soon he would be again caught up in a whirlwind of fire and death.....

We took a first-class ticket. Shura went inside to put his suitcase on the berth, and jumped out again in panic.

"Mama, there's a general there!" he cried, confused and embarrassed like a small boy.

"You're a fine soldier!" I joked. "Off to the front, and afraid of one of your own generals?"

I stood with Shura on the platform till the last moment. The train moved off, I walked along beside the carriage and Shura stood on the step, waving to me. Then I could not keep up and just stood looking after him. The rumble of the wheels was deafening, the rush of air almost swept me off my feet, my eyes were wet with tears.... Then the platform suddenly grew quiet and empty. But it still seemed to me that in the gloom ahead I could make out my son's face and his hand waving good-bye.

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART

Once again I was left alone. But now I did not feel as sad and lonely as before. My work helped.

I have always wanted to thank from the bottom of my heart those of you who helped me in those days with your letters, your sympathy and your kindness. All of you who came to me and said firmly and insistently, "Do come to our factory. You must speak to our Komsomol members."

I know that when a person feels very bad, only one thing can help him—the consciousness that he is needed by others, that his life is not useless. When my misfortune overtook me, you helped me to believe that I was needed, and not only by Shura, but by many, many other people. When he went away you did not let me, did not allow me, to remain alone. It was very difficult for me but it saved me. I knew I was needed.

There was a lot of work everywhere, work which called for loving hands and a loving heart. The war had robbed many children of their homes and families. "Orphan," a word which we had almost forgotten, claimed our attention with grim insistence. And something had to be done so that children who had lost their parents in the war should not feel fatherless and lonely. They had to be given back the warmth, love and security that only home and family can give.

And I began to work.

As many more children's homes as possible—good ones,

really comfortable and well provided for! As many more real teachers as possible, efficient and loving! The children needed shoes, clothes, food, and even more than that—love, warmth, kindness. Children's homes sprang up everywhere, in all the towns, at factories and collective farms. Everybody wanted to do something for the children of our war dead.

And it meant so much to me that I could take part in this work!

I had to travel a lot in those days. I went to Tambov, Ryazan, Kursk,

Ivanovo, then to Byelorussia and the Ukraine, to the Altai, to Tomsk and Novosibirsk. Everywhere there was no end of work, everywhere there were orphaned children. Shelter had to be found for them in a new family or in a children's home. And everywhere I was met by eyes full of trust and affection. And I kept learning, learning courage and endurance from my people.

As far back as the end of 1944 the Red Cross Society sent me to Leningrad.

On the pedestals where once Klodt's wondrous steeds had reared and strained out of the hands of bronze youths stood boxes of flowers so that the accustomed eye should not be offended by the absence of the familiar statues. Notices on the walls still warned passers by, "This side more dangerous during artillery bombardment." But the people of Leningrad, surrounded with the help of the whole country, had long since



The cover of a book about Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya published in China

started repairing their houses, putting back the windowpanes, levelling and asphaltting the pavements.

There was an elderly woman with me, a welder from the Elektrosila Plant. She told me how during the blockade she and her husband had worked side by side at their lathes. They worked with their last strength, starved, overcoming weakness by sheer will power, by a stubborn desire not to surrender. One day, when she turned round to look at her husband, she saw him lying on the floor, dead. She went up to him, stood there for a moment, and then went on working. She worked and her husband lay beside her, by the lathe which he had not quitted until his last breath. To stop work meant giving in to the enemy, and she did not want to give in.

I heard of an architect in Leningrad who during the very worst; the most difficult days of the blockade had designed the Arch of Victory. I was told of mothers whose children had died defending Leningrad: those mothers did not spare their last strength to save the children of others from starvation. I listened to such stories, and again I said to myself, "I have no right to surrender to my grief. These people have endured a great calamity, their sufferings and losses have been as great as mine. They live and work. I must live and work too."

And I knew one thing more. Zoya is loved by the people. With her name on their lips our people, her comrades and mine, went into battle, worked in the factories, worked in the fields; her fame reached a boy from Krasnodon, Oleg Koshevoi, who told his friends about her, and together they repeated her feat and took their places beside her as her brothers and sisters, children of our great and beloved Motherland.

The memory of Zoya is alive and vivid. She is dear not only to me. The people remember her alive, valiant, unbending.

And that helped me to live too.

LETTERS

My nephew Slava, who had been fighting since the very first days of the war, used to write to me from the front.

After we met each other at Zoya's grave Pyotr Lidov began to write to me. More often than not he wrote only a few words of greeting, but these, however few, were very dear to me. When I opened the newspaper I always looked for dispatches from the front signed by Lidov. He wrote about everything so simply, calmly and bravely. His was a special gift. In that simplicity, in that calmness lay tremendous strength. And when the familiar name did not appear in *Pravda* for a long time I began to feel worried. I worried about him as if he were my son or brother.

And every week letters arrived from Shura.

"We're all in jolly good spirits, especially after our last attack. In that battle I stayed in my tank for more than forty-eight hours. It's a miracle we remained whole, everything around was in flames and shaking with explosions, and the tank was chucked about like a box of matches. But don't worry about me, Mummy."

"...Now I'll be receiving a new crew and a new 'KV' fighting machine. This will be my third already: one was hit, the other caught fire—I hardly had time to hop out of it myself.... Of my old crew Dzhigiris was killed, the others were wounded.... I have written to Grandad. You write too. He is ill and lonely."

"...I was wounded but did not leave the battlefield. I bound up the wound and went back into action. It's all healed up now. In one affair my senior commander was hit. I took command myself, and together with my comrades broke through into the enemy's position. In the morning Orsha was ours. And all our crew is alive and well ... I had a letter from Grandad. He's having a hard time. He keeps on thinking about Zoya and Grandma. I have answered his letter, and tried to be as gentle as I could."

"...The local inhabitants are glad to see us. They are interested



Alexander Kosmodemyansky at the front
in January 1945

in everything, everything seems strange to them. In one hut I showed them a book about Zoya. And they asked me a lot of questions and begged me to leave them the book. I could not—it's my only copy. So I ask you, if you can, to send them one—69 Perekopskaya Street, Orsha."

"... In Byelorussia the long-awaited hour of liberation has come. The people greet us with flowers and give us milk to drink. The old women tell us with tears in their eyes about the sufferings they have had to endure. But all that is past. And the air seems to be particularly clean and the sun particularly bright. Mummy, Victory will be here soon!"

"... Give my best wishes to Uncle Sergei. Tell him that I remember all he told me. Is Grandad writing to you? I haven't had a letter from him for ever so long."

"... You ask what my rank is and what job I am doing. I'll answer in the words of a big chief who said this of me, 'He is not made for ranks but for battle.'"

"...Thanks for the congratulations. I really did receive the golden order—the Order of the Patriotic War, First Class. I have been informed that I have been awarded the Order of the Red Banner. Do not think that I have changed. My character is just the same as it was. Only I've become stronger, firmer."

"... Mummy, Pyotr Lidov has been killed! Mummy, how terrible that he was killed such a short time before Victory. How sad to die on the eve of Victory. He was killed on an airfield at Poltava: he ran out of the shelter to see how our men were beating off an attack by enemy planes. He wanted to write about them—he wanted to see everything with his own eyes. He was a real war correspondent and a real man..."

"...We are advancing westwards across enemy territory. I have been fighting continuously for the past fortnight, that's why I have not written. But I was so glad, so glad to have your letter. It was a letter from my home country, from my own

mother..... Now, as I write to you, the air is itself rumbling, my tank is trembling, the earth seems to be dancing with explosions. In a few minutes our lads will go into the attack, straight into the heart of German territory." (This letter was scribbled in pencil, in big hasty handwriting. Shura, too, was hurrying into battle.)

".. Hello, Mummy darling! I have been in heavy offensive fighting for more than a month now. Not only have I not had time to write, I have not even had time to read the letters I received.....There were forced night marches, and tank battles, tense, sleepless nights in the rear of the enemy, screaming fire shells from the 'Ferdinands'.... I have had to see my comrades die, to see the next tank blow up in the air with all its crew. I could only grit my teeth in silence. Men climb out of their machines as if drunk, because of the tension and lack of sleep. But nevertheless we are all in the best of spirits, a real holiday mood: we are on enemy territory. We are avenging the year 1941 the pain, the tears, all the humiliation which the fascists have made people suffer.

"We will soon be seeing each other in Moscow, in familiar surroundings."

"... I am not fighting, I am waiting for the order to attack. We've taken up a defensive position. Every day is monotonously quiet and the waiting is agonizing. We are living in German houses. Grey, ruined buildings everywhere. Huge bomb craters make you turn off the gloomy asphalt highway. The shellfire goes on day and night, our house shakes and sways. The fascists are resisting with crazy fury, they cling onto every scrap of land. Right now they have started firing on their own village... In the last battle I got a slight scratch, it is all over now, though my chest still hurts....."

"... Rain, rain The sea is grey and cold, and it just blows up bad weather. It is gloomy and cold here. I want to be home and I hope I soon shall be. Take care of yourself, mind your

health and write more often. Do not worry about me. I kiss you.

"Your only son,
"Alexander."

This letter was marked "East Prussia," and, the date was April 1, 1945

I waited for the next letter—it did not come. I was afraid to think, I just waited. It was not disaster I feared—my boy was too much alive, too fond of life, I could still hear his words, so full of faith, "I will come back!"

DEATH OF A HERO

On April 20 I found a letter in the letter box. Shura's field post office number was on the envelope, but the address was not in his handwriting. I stood holding the letter for a long time, afraid to unseal it. Then I tore open the envelope and read the first lines. The room went dark before my eyes. I drew a deep breath, started reading again, and again could not read on. Then I gritted my teeth as hard as I could and read to the end.

"April 14, 1945

"Dear Lyubov Timofeyevna,

"It is hard for me to write to you. But I beg you to summon all your courage and strength. Your son, Senior Lieutenant of the Guards Alexander Anatolyevich Kosmodemyansky, died the death of a hero in battle with the German invaders. He gave up his young life for the freedom and independence of our Motherland.

"I will say only one thing. Your son is a hero, and you may be proud of him. He defended his Country honourably, and has proved himself worthy of his sister.

"You have given up to your country your dearest possession—your children.

"In the fighting for Königsberg on April 6, Alexander Kosmodemyansky's self propelled gun mount was the first to force a canal thirty metres wide and open fire at the enemy, destroying an artillery battery, blowing up an ammunition dump and killing nearly sixty Hitlerite soldiers and officers.

"On April 8 he was the first to break into the fort of Königin Luisen, where 350 prisoners were captured together with nine tanks in good condition, 200 lorries and a petrol dump. In the course of the fighting Alexander Kosmodemyansky was promoted from commander of a self-propelled gun mount to battery commander. In spite of his youth he commanded the battery successfully and carried out all battle tasks in exemplary fashion.

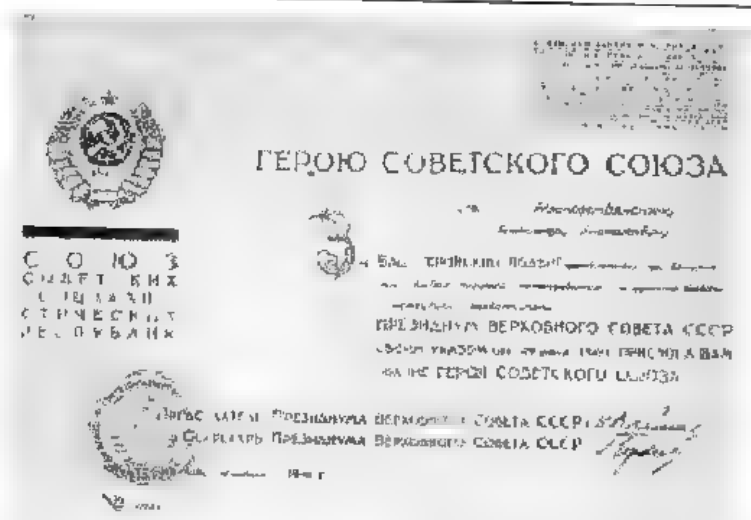
"He was killed yesterday in the fighting for the locality of Vierbrudenkrug, west of Königsberg, which was already in our hands. Your son was one of the first to break into Vierbrudenkrug, wiping out nearly forty Hitlerites and crushing four antitank guns. An exploding enemy shell cut short the life of our dear comrade, Alexander Anatolyevich Kosmodemyansky.

"War and death are inseparable, but it is so much more difficult to be reconciled with death on the eve of our Victory.

"Be courageous. With sincere respect and sympathy,

"Lieutenant-Colonel of the Guards *Legeza*."

On April 30 I flew to Vilnius and from there reached Königsberg by car. Everything all round was destroyed and deserted. Not a store had been left standing. There was not a soul about anywhere. Some Germans straggled past, pushing barrows or carts with household goods in front of them, not daring to raise their heads and meet our eyes... ..

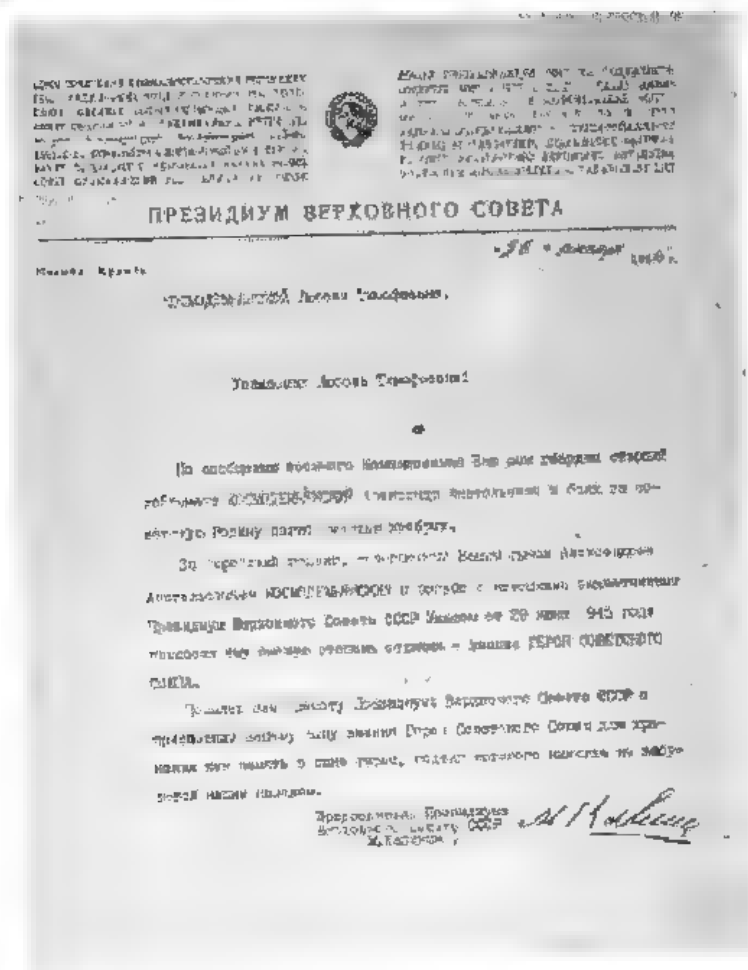


The diploma of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. conferring the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on Alexander Kosmodemyansky

And then we ran into a stream of our own countrymen who, free men now, were returning home. They travelled on horseback, in lorries, on foot, and they all had such cheerful happy faces! Everything showed that Victory was not far away. It was near. It was at hand.

How many times had Shura asked, "Mummy, what do you imagine Victory Day will be like? When will it be? In spring probably, definitely in spring! But even if it comes in winter the snow will melt and the flowers will bloom!"

And now Victory was approaching. This was the eve of Victory, the eve of happiness. And I was sitting by the coffin of my boy. He lay there as if he were alive, his face calm and clear. I had not thought that we should meet again like this. It was more than any human heart could bear.. ..



M. I. Kalinin's letter about the conferring of the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on Alexander Kosmodemyansky. The text of the letter reads as follows:

"Dear Lyubov Timofeyevna,

"The High Command has informed us that your son, Senior Lieutenant of the Guards Alexander Anatolyevich Kosmodemyansky has died the death of the brave, fighting for his country

"For the heroic feat performed by your son Alexander Anatolyevich Kosmodemyansky in battle with the German invaders the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., by its Decree of June 29, 1945, has conferred on him the highest distinction—the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

"I am sending you the diploma of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. conferring on him the title of Hero of the Soviet Union that you may keep it in memory of your heroic son, whose valour our people will never forget.

"Chairman of the Presidium of the
Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.

"M. Kalinin."

When I raised my eyes from Shura's face I saw another young face. I looked at it and could not think where I had seen it before. It was hard to think, to remember.

"I am Volodya Titov," said the young man quietly.

And I at once recalled the April evening when I had come home and found Shura and his comrades deep in talk. And again I heard my son's voice, "The general himself treated us to cigarettes... We are going to the Ulyanovsk Tank School....."

"And the others?" I asked with an effort.

And Volodya told me that Yura Braudo and Volodya Yuryev were dead. They had been killed, like Shura, only a short time before Victory...How many young heroes did not live to see that glorious day!

I cannot give a clear account of those two days in Königsberg. But I remember the love and respect with which everyone spoke of Shura.

"Brave... modest....." I heard. "And such a comrade! Young, but a real commander... I'll never forget him.....!"

And then—the road back. Sasha Fesikov, the gunner of Shura's crew, accompanied me. He cared for me as if I were ill. He looked after me like a son, and always knew what to do without asking.

On May 5 Shura was buried in the Novodevichy Cemetery. Opposite Zoya's grave rose another grave mound. In death, as in life, they were together.

That was four days before Victory.

On May 9 I stood at my window and watched the stream of people flowing past. Children and grownups all seemed to be one family, happy and rejoicing. The day was so bright, so sunny!

Never more will my children see the blue sky and the flowers, never more will they greet the Spring. They gave up their lives for other children, for those who were passing me now, at this long-awaited hour.

THEY MUST BE HAPPY

I love to come here, to walk along the dear familiar corridors of my children's school, which now bears Zoya's name. I look into the classrooms. I go up onto the third floor and approach the doors where there is an inscription: "Heroes of the Soviet Union Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya and Shura Kosmodemyansky studied in this classroom."

I enter this room, where the portraits of my children look down at me from the walls. There is the second desk in the middle row—Zoya used to sit there. Now another girl sits at this desk, and she has Zoya's clear eyes. And there that desk at the back of the next row—that was Shura's place. The girl who sits there now looks up at me. She is wearing a brown frock with a white collar and black apron, and she has such a grave thoughtful face.

I go downstairs to the little ones. I sit down at a low desk beside a little first-grader and open her reading book. On the cover of the book are golden ears of wheat, a blue sky, and pine trees—a well-loved picture of our own peaceful countryside. It seems to embody all that the book tells about. Every page of this book is a hymn for peaceful labour, to our native soil, to our forests and waters, to our people. Our country has straightened its shoulders; it is building and creating, it is sowing corn, smelting steel, raising from the ashes the burnt-out towns and villages. And it is rearing new, wonderful people.

This girl who sits beside me, and all her friends, and all the children throughout the Soviet land are being taught the greatest wisdom—to love their peoples, to love their Motherland. They are being taught to respect the labour and brotherhood of the peoples, to respect and value all the beautiful things that have been created by the peoples of the Earth.

They must be happy! They shall be happy!



The mother of Zoya and Shura with pioneers of the Molotov Auto Works in the town of Gorky

So much blood has been shed, so many lives have been sacrificed that they might be happy, that a new war might not cripple their future!

Yes, many that were young, pure and honest are dead. Zoya and Shura are dead. Another pupil of School No. 201, a fine airman, Oleg Balashov, died the death of a hero. Vanya Nosenkov, who once read us the poem about Maté Zalka, is dead. The hot arguer Petya Simonov is dead. Volodya Yuryev and Yura Braudo have lost their lives. The writer Arkadi Gaidar was killed during the first months of the war. Only a short while before Victory death claimed Pyotr Lidov, the war correspondent of *Prauda*.... So many loved ones, so many sad losses. But by their feats, their valour, and their death, those that fell in this great and cruel struggle paved the road to Victory and Happiness.

And the living—work, build and create.

Here is a young woman with a kind, pleasant face coming down the corridor to meet me. She is Katya Andreyeva. She has done what she intended to do; she has become a schoolmistress teaching at her old school, the school where she studied together with Zoya and Shura.

My children's classmates are now engineers, doctors, teachers. They continue the work for the sake of which their comrades gave up their lives.

I walk along the familiar corridor. The door of the library is open. Shelf after shelf along the walls is full of books, a great number of books.

"Before the war we had twenty thousand volumes. Now we have forty thousand," says Katya to me.

I go outside. The school is surrounded with green trees. There they are, the trees the children planted. And I seem to hear Zoya's voice:

"My linden is the third one—remember, Mummy."

AT THE BUFFALO STADIUM

April 1949. Paris. The Buffalo Stadium. A meeting of the supporters of peace.

During the Paris Congress "peace caravans" kept coming to the stadium from every corner of France. On foot, on bicycles, in cars, and in boats along the rivers, people made their way to Paris in order to say, "We shall defend peace. We do not want war." And on Sunday, before the closing of the Congress, a huge crowd gathered on and around the Buffalo Stadium. And above it, above the sea of flowers soared white doves—the symbol of Peace and tranquility.

There was amazing strength in that extraordinary parade of fighters for peace. There were French miners, sailors from Marseilles, weavers from Lyons, peasants from the north of France. A column of French mothers went by, carrying a large placard with the inscription, "The mothers of France will never give up their sons for a war against the Soviet Union!"

The children of those who died in fascist prisons marched in the parade. In their hands were placards, "We want peace! We want to live!"

I heard someone's excited cry, "You will live because there is the Soviet Union in the world!"

I will never forget one other column. members of the Resistance movement—ex-prisoners of the terrible Hitlerite "death camps." On this beautiful day, amid the wonderful spring flowers, amid the lilac, peonies and roses, they marched in striped convicts' clothes, which they had kept in memory of something never to be forgotten. They seemed to be saying, "Remember what happened! Remember the shame, the humiliation, the unbearable sufferings and torments which fascism brings upon people! Fascism means war! Remember what happened, what we lived through! May it never happen again!"

And again and again I thought: yes, one must remember and remind others of what we have lived through.

That is why, overcoming my grief, I have tried to write this book. It is not those who lie in their graves that are dead. The dead are those who have forgotten the horrors of war, who want another war to break out. We have no right to forget, we dare not forget! If humanity remembers the bloody hell of fascism, it will not allow itself to be thrown into that hell again. But who, if not my Country, can remind the world of its duty? Whose voice rings loudest in every corner of the globe, in the hearts of men, if not the voice of my people?

I have in mind those men who gripped my hand tightly when they met me at the Congress, and in whose eyes there was sympathy and understanding. I have in mind the Negro woman who embraced me and patted my shoulder as much as to say that she mourned with me. The woman from India who kept whispering to me just one word, "ZoyaZoya....." In that word there was not only sympathy for my grief, but respect for the spirit of my people.

To save humanity from shame, from slavery and murder the Soviet state sacrificed not its gold but its blood. At the very highest price—the blood and the lives of her children—my country gave back to humanity the right to breathe.

And now, as before, all that is good and beautiful and freedom-loving is linked inseparably with our great Motherland, with the name of Stalin!

I know that the millions of brave and honourable hearts are a great, invincible force. Before it the mercenary wild beasts who threaten the world with a terrible new war are nought.

At the call of the mothers, at the call of all the democratic forces of the world the 1st of June has been proclaimed International Children's Day. Everywhere the simple people are fighting for peace—for joy and happiness, for their children's



"Zoya." A sculpture by M. Manizer

lives. May the voice of the people ring yet louder in defence of peace, in defence of children!

Yes, there was great and profound truth in the words of our delegate who spoke so nobly from the tribune of the Congress! Nowadays every person must ask himself, "What have I done to defend peace?" And if everyone really does defend peace, if all honest people unite—we will safeguard peace and secure the happiness of our children, the happiness of the nations.

•



ZOYA